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ORPHEUS

And Other Poems

WILLIS HALL VITTUM



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ORPHEUS

AND OTHER POEMS

Willis Hall Vittum

WILLIS HALL VITNUM

*"But let some portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unnew
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing."*



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TO MY WIFE

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This wreath of halting rhyme, dear heart,
Is my poor offering
Before thy quiet shrine, whose part
Throughout my wayfaring
In winter's cold, in summer's blight,
O'er field and flood and fell,
Hath been that of a pilot light
To lands where all is well.
But though the garland withered be,
Thy love shall make it sweet.
'Tis all I have. Despairingly
I lay it at thy feet.

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ORPHEUS AND OTHER POEMS

ORPHEUS

Part I

Calliope, chief muse of all the nine,
With bowed head and with bated breath I ask
Thine aid and guidance: help me line by line
Lest that I fail in my appointed task.
Unworthy, I, to touch thy garment's hem,
Yet now, before my song is even begun,
Thee I implore for many a verbal gem
To decorate this story of thy son.
Oh, crush not out the tiny spark of flame
Which, though presumptuous, yet is full of fear
And longing to extol thy gracious name,
And that of thy great son, in accents clear.

I

Aeons ago, mid dim and fragrant groves,
In farthest Thrace, when all the ambient air
Was vital with the springtime, and the loves
Of bird and beast were throbbing everywhere,
Fairest Calliope was wandering
Seeking that purple flower, the namesake dear
Of sweetest Iris, whom the poets sing
As goddess of the rainbow high and clear.

Charmed by the sights and odors as she strayed,
Forgetful of her godhead on that day,
She seemed a gentle, simple woodland maid
Tempting her sister Nymphs to come and play.
Upon her rounded arm a basket green
Of wreathèd willow hung, and, as she moved,
She was the fairest maiden, well I ween,
Ever by gods or heroes to be loved.

So straying on she presently was 'ware
Of fluttering wings and cooings soft and clear,
When lo! about her all the crystal air
Was filled with gleaming doves both far and near.
These were the doves, although she knew it not,
Of Venus, who had flown from Paphos far,
In that fair Cyprian isle without a blot,
Where their great mistress is the guiding star.
Enchanted at the airy dalliance sweet,
She felt a sudden soft desire oppress
Her swelling breast, so moved on footsteps fleet
These lovely birds to fondle and caress.
But like the marshy ignis fatuus,
The wary doves evaded near approach,
And as the waters of King Tantalus,
Kept just beyond her tender yearning touch.
Still striving to accomplish her desire,
She followed where through wide dim aisles they
 sped,
Pausing at last, to wonder, and admire
The secret refuge to which they had fled.

For here the trees had ranged themselves around
A space no bigger than a little room,
Where the bright sunshine, which its way had
 found
Among the leaves, was dulled to golden gloom.
The walls around this lovely sylvan place

Were wainscoted with rare and lacy ferns,
Such as among our modern city race
Are reared most tenderly in marble urns.
And round about, above the ferny wall,
Between the whispering trees, were interlaced
Sweet shrubs and slender flowering bushes tall:
And chiefly that Syringa which is traced
To the wild grief of Pan, who when he lost
The lovely Syrinx, fashioned blossoms rare,
So formed that when by gentle zephyrs tossed,
Delicious odors fill the grateful air.
And as the flowering branches intertwine,
Creeping among them comes the ivy green,
Emblem of joy, great Bacchus' sacred vine,
Binding the whole to form a living screen.
The only entrance to this vernal bower
Was garlanded with drooping trumpet vine,
Where brown bees hummed e'en at the noon-tide
hour,
Rifling the blossoms of their dewy wine.
The emerald floor was sparkling with the eyes
Of early flowers, children of youthful spring,
Narcissi fair recalled their parent's sighs,
And hapless Echo's aimless answering.
The starry trefoil and the violet,
The crocus striving first of all to be,
The blood root with its dewy gems beset,
And faintly blushing, pure anemone.
Midmost of all arose a rounded bank
Cushioned with springy mosses crisp and deep,
Exhaling odors cool and fresh and dank,
Inviting to the poppy-lidded sleep.
Just at one side a tiny rivulet
Bickered 'mongst osier roots and mossy stones,
Laving the plants along its borders set,
And babbling in most sweet and drowsy tones.
Enshrined within this cooling restful dell,

Her heart enthralled by many a fair conceit,
The pensive maiden yields to Fancy's spell
Drawing her down where sleep and waking meet.
Low humming of the gauzy-wingèd bees,
The ring-doves crooning in the tree tops there,
The babbling brook, the odors,—all of these
Combine her drowsy senses to ensnare.
Scarce knowing what she did, the dreamy maid
Laid her fair limbs along the mossy bank,
And like a closing flower, unafraid,
Through pleasant dreams to deepest Lethe sank.
As chance decreed, sweeping through upper air,
Apollo, lighting in that self-same wood,
Espied the beauties of the bower fair,
And soon within the flowery entrance stood.
Enraptured at the sight, and scarcely deeming
The vision true, so quietly she slept,
He stood adoring, till from out her dreaming
A sudden smile over her features swept.
Then a sweet madness seized him and he flew
Across the bower, and on her lips he pressed
His own, and tasted purest honey dew,
And felt the swelling of that silver breast.
Swept into ecstasy from deepest sleep.
'Twas thus Apollo won her, so 'tis said:
There amid Nature's charms so pure and deep,
That mossy bank became her bridal bed.

Sweet infant bard, first poet of the world,
Such was the mating from which thou didst spring.
Within thy tiny body lies upfurled
That fire by which e'en latest poets sing.
The story of thy life, so full of pain,
Sad disappointment down to bitter tears,
Thy brief delight soon, soon, to flee again,
Has torn true hearts these many thousand years.
Thy bright lyre shining in the highest heavens,

Sole relic of a life so sad and sweet,
Recalls our own scant happiness that leavens
The bitter bread of failure and defeat.

II

Unconscious babe, around thy happy head,
Fanning the air with gauzy pinions bright,
Sweet dreams and airy phantasies are led
To fill thy dawning senses with delight.
While the great muse, thy mother, hovers still
In deep solicitude above thy bower,
Within thy very being to instil
The love of poesy and music's power.
And from Olympian heights of majesty
Thy father fondly smiles upon his own,
And promises both gods and men shall see
Apollo's lyre descending to his son.
Gifted in all above our mortal measure
As there thou liest under Rhodope,
Great Pan himself bestows on thee the treasure
Of wondrous skill in woodland minstrelsy.
For, in the years to come, he can foretell
How closely interknit thy fate shall be
With that of one whom now he loveth well—
His own most favored Nymph, Eurydice.

And now the ceaseless flight of passing years
Has brought the babe to life's gay morning time:
Midst childish joys, too young as yet for tears,
Even now he sweeps the lyre with touch sublime.
O happy child in these thine hours of bliss,
Thine only teachers Nymphs and Naiads bright,
Who teach thee all that sweet and lovely is,
Obedience to the gods, and music's might.

Too soon, alas! the childish days are o'er,
And we behold him here a stripling grown.
All men his living harmonies adore.
He cometh now at last into his own.
The sweet compulsion of his wistful strain
The savage lion to his feet has drawn:
Thrilled into gentleness by music's pain,
The leopard dwells beside the timid fawn.
Each bird and beast becomes his willing thrall,
Hovering and playing round him as he goes,
Nor tear themselves from the sweet yearning call
Which ever from that charmed lyre flows.
The shivering heartstrings throb and thrill again
In unison with throbbing of the lyre,
And quiver with a rhythmic, pulsing pain,
Swooning in billows of celestial fire.
The sobbing cry of souls in deepest anguish,
The dark despair of hope forever gone,
Piteous appeals from tortured hearts that languish
In dungeons quarried in the living stone:
The plaintive call of desolating sadness,
The wistful following of hope deferred,
The triumph and the joy of youthful gladness,—
All these within those magic tones are heard.

Now comes the time when Fancy's specious smile
Besets young hearts with visions of delight,
Seeking adventurous spirits to beguile
To distant lands searching for fortune bright.
Yielding at length to this imperious call,
With his companions, heroes of old Greece,
He sails for unknown lands, whate'er befall,
Seeking far Colchis and the Golden Fleece.
Upon a lovely morn of early spring
This band of heroes sailed from Iolchos forth,
With spirits dancing and with hope a-wing,
Eager to see the unknown parts of earth.

Bright Phoebus painted all the ocean o'er
With sparkling rainbows of brisk dashing spray:
While gently blowing horns of Tritons bore
Good omen to the voyagers on their way.
Down in the crystal depths were clearly seen
The daughters of Oceanus at play,
Fair maidens in their coronals of green,
More lovely than the flowers of early May.
And out upon the curling ridgy crests,
Floating among the dolphins sporting there,
Sweet Panope in all her beauty rests
Combing the glorious sunlight of her hair.
For many days over the blue Aegean
The good ship followed on the ebb and flow,
While the young heroes sang a grateful paean
To Aeolus, whose favoring breezes blow.
After long weeks upon that summer sea
The ship approaches sunny Lesbos' shore,
Where such a welcome waits them as shall be
Granted to travelers on earth no more.
Here too, alas! end of thy stricken years,
Down drifting through the pitying seas shall come
Thy tortured visage, 'mid ambrosial tears
Of Nymph and Nereid to its final home.

The marvel-breathing legends of the journey
By the great poets have been sung of old,
More wondrous far than knightly joust or tourney,
Or kingly meetings on the cloth of gold.
Well was it for each primal Argonaut
That the young Orpheus was of the crew,
For many were the miracles he wrought
With his sweet lyre as o'er the foam they flew.
When the fair Sirens' wistful voices called
Drawing the very hearts and souls of men
To their destruction, there to be enthralled,

And never come among their kind again,
Then Orpheus by the magic of his lyre
Wrested those hesitating hearts away
From the accomplishment of their desire
To seek the fair forms on the ledges gray.
He sang a strain so weirdly wild and sweet
That even the Sirens listened with delight,
Forgetting, in the music's rhythmic beat,
Their fate approaching black as darkest night.
And later, on the tossing restless seas,
When dire disaster threatened ship and crew,
His music softened the Symplegades
To ope their stony jaws and let them through.
Even in Colchis, at their journey's end,
The silver lyre controlled the mad caprice
Of the grim dragon stationed to defend
From all intruders the famed Golden Fleece.

Triumphant now, they're on their homeward course,
Each one assured of an immortal name:
Renowned throughout the world for manly force,
Made mightier still by dire Medea's fame.

III

And so they came to their own land again,
And separated, each one to his own.
Sweet Orpheus, with spirits pleased amain,
Quickly to Thracia's flowery meads has flown.
Charming and thrilling all, as long before,
Again he wanders throughout grove and vale,
Where the glad memory of days of yore
Comes with each fragrant wind blown down the
dale.

Then on a day it happened, as he played
For Nymphs and Dryads gathered round to share

The flowing strains, there came a lovely maid
As sweet and simple as the flowers are.
And as she came within the music's sound,
The maiden paled and faltered and stood still:
Her heart, drawn from her breast without a wound,
Yearns to those tones that bless yet seem to kill.
Enchanted, frozen into marble pale,
With wistful eyes seeking the reason why
Entrancing music makes her spirit quail—
She stood, the image of pure poetry.

What of the bard whose magic tones have wrought
Such strange enchantment for this lady fair,
Whose brow, as crystal clear, shows every thought
As pure and innocent as mountain air?
Only one look he gave her when she came,
But with that look he 'gan the maid adore;
Struck through and through by Eros' dart of flame,
He wavered in her worship nevermore.
For in that moment when his blissful eyes
Beheld Eurydice so pure and fair,
Love swept his soul away, and sweet surmise,
And doubt, and hope were left contending there.
And every airy phantasy and dream
That bright Euphrosyne brings in her train,
And every charming sprite of field or stream
Brought lovely visions to his wildered brain.
Till in an ecstasy of wild desire
His fingers o'er the golden strings he swept,
Waking the spirit of that living lyre
Where midst her tenderest harmonies she slept.
Then liquid notes down dropping from on high
With sweetest music filled the listening plain,
As when, from out the splendors of the sky
Some shattered rainbow falls in iridescent rain.
The golden strings, swept by celestial fire,
Covered the gamut of our weal and woe;

Joy, grief, and happiness; the bard's own sire
Could never bid more tuneful numbers flow.
And in, and out, and through the music's maze,
Now here, now there, flitting on fitful wing,
Recurring ever, comes the maiden's praise.
'Tis love, triumphant love, that strikes the string!
What maid such wooing sweet could long with-
stand?

Soon to enraptured Orpheus she confessed
Her growing love, and that confession spanned
The gulf twixt dire despair and visions blest.

All secrecy was laid aside at last,
And the blue heavens smiled upon their love.
Great Pan gave them fair greeting as he passed,
And Nymph and Naiad with each other strove
Who should bring fairest flowers and garlands gay,
And dance about them in the happy fields
Where, as young lovers should in month of May,
He sues for kisses, she, denying, yields.
So for a time their blissful life ran smooth,
All graces and perfections thither came,
Basking within their hapiness as doth
A horde of moths about a torch's flame.
And every Nymph within the laughing mead,
And every Naiad of the crystal spring,
And Satyrs piping on the slender reed,
And every warbling bird on gleaming wing,
And Zephyr of the cooling restful breeze,
And airy sprites in lilies' cups who dwell,
All gather, playing 'neath the whispering trees,
Drawn by the magic of their love's sweet spell.
And with them came the train of Fancy bright,
Splendors and dreams and sweet imaginings,
And sighing breaths of amorous delight,
And steadfast Harmony, from Joy that springs;
These hovering about the happy pair,

Nestle within each clinging golden tress,
And twine like tendrils round that lady fair,
Whom by their presence they enchant and bless.

IV

But on a fatal and accursèd day,
As sweet Eurydice was wandering
Through the tall grass, upon her sunny way,
She felt the spiteful adder's lethal sting.
No time to bid her loving lord farewell,
But swept at once along the downward path
That leads to Pluto's regions, that dread hell
Where all are gathered after earthly death.
Her moaning cries unanswered must remain,
For Orpheus has crossed full many a hill,
Soothing and shielding other hearts from pain
Which, soon, Oh soon, his stricken breast shall fill.
Then was her absence known, and now the wood
Reechoes to the wild despairing cries
Of Nymph and Naiad and each spirit good
Searching her path with wide fear-stricken eyes.
And when upon the fatal spot they strayed
Where the dull adder's loathly coil was spread,
One drop of that dear blood upon a blade
Of shrinking grass, betrayed the deed of dread.
O cursèd beast, forever doomed to crawl
Upon thy belly through the mud and slime,
Forever shall man's wrath upon thee fall,
Loathing shall follow thee to end of time.

Who shall describe the wild drear loneliness
Of Orpheus as he strays among the hills
Thinking upon each loving kind caress
Of the dear Nymph whose loss his spirit kills?
No softening tear is loosened from those eyes
Wide open, straining over field and dell,

Seeking the slender graceful form that lies
Forever graven in each crystal well.
The spirit of his lyre distraught did go,
Her music turned to sad complainings drear,
Without the master's hand to guide her woe,
Low shuddering moans alone may reach the ear.
Sweet stricken bard, all Nature shares thy grief:
The shivering aspen whispers soft and low,
The willow droops each slender shining leaf
And through the years still bears thy weight of
 woe.

The sombre pine threw down his choicest cones
When sighing Zephyr told the dismal tale,
And wept balsamic tears, amid his moans,
Whose sad funereal fragrance filled the vale.
Each weeping lily from its silver vase
Pours forth its treasured store of dewy wine,
And toward the smiling sky turns not its face,
But drooping sadly there doth still repine.
And all the Nymphs and Naiads who erstwhile
Had basked within the sunshine of her love,
Remembering that pure heart so free from guile,
Now grieved heartbrokenly as mourning dove.
But tenderest sympathy avails not here.
Distracted Orpheus roams the hills alone,
Seaching the wilds without or hope or fear,
His life one sad and dreary monotone.

At last a sudden stern resolve possessed
His bleeding spirit, and he turned to go
To that dim unknown land in farthest west
Where opes the portal to the realms below.
And as he journeyed on his dreadful way
He called with mad intensity upon
His mighty mother, for her aid and stay,
And to his father on his fiery throne.
Beseeching them in the dear name of love

To help him now in his great agony,
To find such tones as Pluto's heart should move,
And bend the will of stern Persephone.

Full many times the moon did wax and wane
Before he reached the gloomy groves that stand
Surrounding the grim portal to the pain
And suffering of iron Pluto's land.
Now as he entered on the dismal way,
Strange plants surrounded him on every side;
The deadly nightshade that doth ever slay
All living things that near it would abide.
And its malignant potency was shown
By pitiful dead songsters of the air
Thickly about the fatal bushes strewn,
Slaughtered for tasting of those berries fair.
And just beyond a mournful sight was seen
Where, gasping out its final fainting breath,
A tiny humming bird of emerald green
Was folded in the vile and sticky sheath
Of a strange murderous plant, whose honied leaves
Possess the dreadful and uncanny power
Of closing round all humming honey thieves,
And the poor helpless victim to devour.
And loathsome pulpous fronds of spotted plants
Whose noisome exhalations choke the breath,
Among whose grisly roots there ever haunts
The viper with the forkèd tongue of death.
And mosses like a million coffin worms
Planted on end and writhing in the dusk,
And cactus grim that deepest scorn affirms
For foliage, threatens with thorn-pointed tusk,
And hideous blotchy leaves of creeping vines
That cumber every stately forest tree,
Whose baleful grapes are pressed to make the wines
Poured for their victims by the Furies three.
Each slender graceful plant that thrills the heart
With pleasure when in flowery meadows seen,

Has here its swollen bloated counterpart
Distorted into ghastly livid green.

Unwittingly to this grim region come,
The poet, heaving many a thankful sigh,
Emerged from out that pestilential home
Of horrors which all Nature's laws defy.
For now those monstrous forests terminate
And the undaunted traveler attains
A rocky region, sad and desolate,
Wherein the very soul of silence reigns.
And as he presses on his unknown way,
He sees the rugged crags now higher grown.
The path along which without stop or stay
He hastens breathlessly, winds ever down,
Leading at last into a jagged cleft
Where lightning's shock has sundered hill from hill,
And through the space by strokes Titanic reft
From solid rock, it plunges downward still.
Here, close beside the narrow shelving way,
A raging torrent's mighty force is spent,
Covering the rocks with mists of driving spray,
Making more hard that perilous descent.
But with a courage born of wild despair
He stumbles down the treacherous incline,
Upholden, though he knows it not, even there
By great Apollo's shielding love divine.
At this there yawned before him black as night,
Made terrible by snarling beasts who fought
And tore each other in their furious might,
The gateway to the regions that he sought.
Not even here he faltered, but still pressed
Into that channel through earth's bowels riven,
For the wild longing in his stricken breast
Was stronger than or earth or hell or heaven.
When lo! the dismal entrance passed and won,
He finds it but a vain deluding masque,
For of the raging beasts the sound alone

Remained to fright him from his heavy task.
Malicious imps come at their god's behest
To mime and juggle in the darkness there,
With foul intent to end his pious quest
Now fled, their mocking laughter heard from far.
And soon the rocky hallway makes an end:
Then straight he enters to a strange sad land
Whose vague faint half-light, (which no planets
send,)

Reveals a massive arch and portal grand.
And just within the gloomy portal's centre
Lieth that famed three-headed beast of yore,
Who never yet forbade poor mortal enter,
But holds him prisoner forevermore.

This final barrier passed, dark Pluto's realm
Now opens out before him far and wide
Beneath dim twilight that doth ever whelm
With deep despondence all who there abide.
Vague shadowy swarms of spirits, in their pain
Seeking that solace they may never find,
Drift up and down the desolated plain
Like swirling leaves before autumnal wind.
These spirits drear ne'er had their mortal frame
Laid piously beneath the kindly sod,
Victims eternal of that earthly shame,
They cower beneath the scourgings of the rod:
For never may they cross the Stygian river
While their dull lifeless bodies taint the air,
Sweet peace and quiet visit them, Oh never,
But leave them to dark desolation's care.

The poet wanders now across the plain
To a great river's marge, whose farther shore
Is hid in clouds and mists and driving rain
Which cover in that landscape evermore.
Then out of the dark whirl, amid the din
Of swollen waters rushing through the night,

Comes that stern boatman, old and bent and thin,
Rowing full calmly in the flood's despite.
But when he saw a living mortal there
Amazement filled his eyes, and then he frowned
And motioned him away, but still would stare,
Seeking to understand, but nothing found.
Now must the lyre touch aged Charon's heart,
And soon pure melody filled all the air:
Strange weird emotions did its tones impart
Sounding thus sweetly in the turmoil there.
The dim and ancient boatman trembled then,
Sighing he motioned Orpheus to draw near,
Bidding him sing those wondrous songs again,
Prolonging thus one joy in life so drear.
Then straight he stretches forth his shaking hand
And guides the poet, with expression new
On that grim upturned face; and from the land
They swept and drove the dreadful currents
through.

Beyond the mists and battling torrents whirled,
He sees arising through the clearer air,
The strange mysterious dreaded under-world
Where Pluto reigns with Ceres' daughter fair.

Then from the skiff he hastened, and along
The banks he wandered, 'neath the dreamy spell
Which overtakes all those who roam among
The mournful meadows of the asphodel.
Here were those peaceful spirits living still
The lives they followed in the upper air,
But pale and colorless beneath the will
That stifled passion, mirth and pleasure there.
But ever those sad souls look longing back
To earthly joys fled like a summer dream,
Save only those who could endure the rack
No longer, and had drunk of Lethe's stream.

The sunless hills are pierced by many a cell
Burrowed within the hard and rocky soil.
These are their homes, where they must ever dwell,
Wrought by themselves with endless care and toil.
Roaming among these meadows dim and drear,
Where never change of time or season comes,
Is for these spirits all they have of cheer
Aside from that of their own darker homes.

Thrilling with pity for their state forlorn,
The anxious poet must no longer stay,
But goes where hills, to eery figures worn,
Border forever the descending way.
For now the path again leads steeply down
'Neath the foundations of the solid earth,
Midst the grim darkness, now far deeper grown,
Removed beyond all thought of easeful mirth.
Here, from the valleys twixt the phantom hills
Strange stealthy monsters of most hideous mien,
Whose ravening maw the heart with terror fills,
Watching along the lonely path were seen.

Dragons whose eyes dart jetted streams of flame,
And giants of the deadly serpent race,
And that behemoth whose unwieldy frame
Blanches with fear the boldest human face.
Besides were elfins flying through the mirk,
Shrieking and wailing like a soul in pain:
None of the throng would any labor shirk
That might send Orpheus fleeing back again.
But none of these grim shapes had power to harm,
Only to sight and hearing were they bold,
So on he passed, though sooth to say, alarm
Had pinched his face and shrunk his blood with
cold.

Anon he sees a ponderous iron gate
 Which radiate bars full cunningly enforce,
 Across the face of whose firm forgèd grate
 Stand letters hammered out both rough and coarse.
 Ages thereafter, that divinest soul
 Whose spirit straight from that of Orpheus sprang,
 Made the same journey through these regions foul,
 Guided by him who of Aeneas sang.
 He hath writ large the dimly lettered scroll
 So rudely wrought upon this gateway drear.
 Those words of terror through the ages roll,
 "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."
 The sullen gate swung gratingly ajar,
 While Orpheus, aghast with awe and fear,
 With sinking heart passed that forbidding bar
 Enclosing these sad souls in torment here.
 Then entered he a region full of pain
 And suffering that nevermore shall cease;
 Where sobs and moans and stifled cries in vain
 Appeal to vacancy and empty space.

Here the dim flickering light can just reveal
 A spacious hall through which the wild winds rave,
 Revolving Ixion's huge wooden wheel,
 Which heaven's will has made his living grave.
 Driven forever in the dizzy whirl,
 His serpent bonds, writhing in maddened fear,
 Draw tighter still their loathsome slimy coil,
 While hissing threats ever assail his ear.
 Here his ungrateful treachery so vile
 To highest Jove, he rues day after day,
 Longing forever for the sun's bright smile
 Across the laughing meads of Thessaly.

Near by, a vast and dimly lighted cave
 Whence groans and piteous cries forever come,

The shuddering air repeats, wave after wave,
Those sounds of agony amid the gloom.
Here, sating the grim vultures' bloody thirst,
Must suffer while the endless ages run
That dastard giant, for his crime accurst
'Gainst her who had Apollo for a son.

There, in a space below a toppling cliff,
That Phrygian king stands in a mimic sea,
Consumed with thirst, his joints with terror stiff,
He ever cries for help that may not be.
The laden fruit trees growing near his face
Bend back their boughs when he would reach them
there,

Ever tormented by the sight of grace,
Ever he's doomed to disappointment drear.
Well may he rue that ghastly feast, whereto
Was bid each high Olympian on his throne:
His false and babbling tongue well may he rue,
Betraying secrets that were not his own.
And not alone he suffers, for the seed
Of pride and arrogance that he had sown
Within his children's breasts, has for its meed,—
His daughter rendered childless, turned to stone.

Still further on the poet's eye doth meet
A hill, whose sharp precipitous incline
Is rendered glassy smooth by slipping feet
Which for long ages labor here in vain.
Here, while his sweating brow and panting breath
Betray the dire exertion of his toil,
King Sisyphus, still striving underneath
A monstrous stone which must forever roll
Downward again when near the summit high,
Forever urges it with labors vast
To mount the eminence, and quiet lie
Upon the top, and give him rest at last.

Divine communication never told
The crime for which this punishment was given,
But well we may believe his spirit bold
Was full insulting to the powers of heaven.
So there he labors, in the Furies' grasp,
Nor may that stone the longed-for summit win,
Forever must he strain and pant and gasp
To pay the penalty of deadly sin.

Deeper within this inner shrine of woe
The trembling, heartsick, piteous poet sees,
There, in the darkness, where the waters flow,
The sinful souls of the Danaides.
With painful toil and unremitting care
Vast brimming jars they from the stream must lift,
And pour them endlessly within the maw
Of gaping cisterns in a torrent swift;
For well they know their labors here will last
Until these cisterns to the brim are filled;
Nor can they see, within the darkness cast
About them, that the end is still withheld.
Great shards are broken from the bottom deep
Of each huge thirsting implement of clay.
Whence purling rivers bubble forth and sweep
All hope of ended labor far away.

And many more within these granite walls
Are here condemned so suffer endless woe.
Here even the shadow of a hope ne'er falls
Across these lives withered by tortures slow.
Forever groans and wailings fill the air,
Wrung from sad hearts amid their torments sore.
'Mongst shrieks and curses foul and hopeless prayer
These stricken souls must linger evermore.

Fainting and desperate, the poet turns
And hastens to the grim enclosing gate.

A sudden dreadful fear within him burns
Lest in his agony he come too late.
But, as it were at some divine behest,
The gate swings open grudgingly and slow,
And safe from out that terrifying quest
He now emerged, stunned by compassion's blow.

VI

With footsteps faltering and heart cast down
Again he turns into the twilight gray.
In thought he hears those tortured spirits moan,
Nor will those hopeless wailings pass away.
Onward he wanders far into a vale
Whose bordering hills are pierced with darksome
caves,
Where dim mysterious forms his path assail,
But whose assaults his steadfast spirit braves.
Here dwells that shameful and incestuous brood,
Offspring of Death and his vile sister, Sin,
An evil and malicious multitude,
On pinions bat-like, tendinous and thin.
Foul Treachery still stabbing in the back,
And downcast Shame with her averted face,
And Jealousy stretched ever on the rack
Whose winch is turned by Falsehood's legioned race.
And baleful Murder, with his bloodshot eye,
And Lust, forever by his passions swept;
And those twin vices creeping furtive by
Are grasping Avarice and Greed yclept.
And legions more of that malignant breed
With shrieks and howlings sweep athwart his way;
But his pure soul, proof 'gainst their utmost deed,
Baffles them still and robs them of their prey.

So faring on to calmer regions comes
The poet, till, mid meadows dim, he sees

A placid stream whose current never foams,
But flows forever on in restful peace.
And here and there along its grassy shore
Come wandering spirits, bitten by the pain
Of keenest memory of days of yore,
Whose joys departed shall not come again.
These throw themselves lengthwise upon the turf
And drink deep draughts of the quiescent stream,
When rolling billows of oblivion's surf
Sweep memory away like troubled dream.
When this he saw he would no longer stay,
But wandered further from the river's brim;
For Lethe's waters wash the past away,
And memory was all the world to him.

Then as he wandered, lighter grew the air,
And ever hurrying spirits passed him by
Till in the distance rose a palace fair
Whose towers and battlements reached far on high.
Through the chief portal of these massèd piles
Go streaming hosts of spirits sad and drear,
For mighty Pluto in these gloomy aisles,
With his three helpers, sits in judgment here.

And then, Oh god of love, stand by him now!
Far in advance, amidst the press he sees
That slender form, that golden hair whose glow
Is dearer far than sunlight to his eyes.
Then from his inmost heart arose a cry
That shrilled above the rustling of the throng
Which straightway parted, looking lovingly
On him who was himself love's spirit strong.
"Found, found, at last! Gods, but the time was
long!
Thou dream and glory of this riven breast!
Turn, turn, Oh turn, thou source of all my song,
And bring this desolated bosom rest!"

With startled eyes brimming with love's desire,
She turned to fly into the wished-for haven
Of his dear arms, but Pluto's edict dire
Prohibits freedom until judgment given.

VII

So was she swept out of his yearning view.
Now must he win her back, whate'er befall.
With heart on fire and courage spurred anew
He pressed into that mighty judgment hall.
The sight that met his eyes on entering there
Might well the kingliest human mind o'erwhelm.
Gold, silver, gems, in vast profusion rare,
All gathered from their home in Pluto's realm.
Here was a pillar reaching to the height
Of vaulted arches lost amid the gloom,
One shaft of limpid, sea-green malachite,
Like tenderest lily's bud before the bloom.
Yonder from out the gem-encrusted wall
A graceful archway leaps forth into space;
Of purest jasper were the ashlar all,
With softest hammered silver held in place.
Looking more closely he could see that all
The pillars glowing in their lustrous sheen
Were each a shaft of precious mineral.
Never the like upon the earth was seen.
For chrysoprase was there, and amethyst,
And lapis lazuli blue as the sea,
And agate like entangled vines in mist,
And jade and topaz and chalcedony.
Upon the summit of each pillar high,
Of beaten gold, wrought skilfully and well,
A capital was placed on which the eye
Could see fair-carved the mournful asphodel.
The onyx walls were crusted thick with gems

For kingly diadem or sceptre fit.
Amid the darkness of that hall, their gleams
By contrast made the place more dimly lit.
And all those sparkling walls of fairest stone
Were carved with scenes familiar in that hell.
Of birds or trees or flowers there was not one,
Save only the sad lily asphodel.
His anxious eye at last is turned to see
Where those grim powers in sternest judgment sit,
There mid the growing gloom it seems to be
Only a place for deeds of darkness fit.
The awful dais whence they all look down
Upon the crowded spaces in their might,
Is builded of the rarest marble stone,
Black as the darkest hour of starless night.
And there, before the dais is a space
Railed off from that which anxious spirits fill,
Where trembling mortals are compelled to face
Their final doom, whether for good or ill.

But now a hushed expectancy pervades
Those waiting spirits, and from out the gloom
Comes a procession whose uncertain shades
Most dismal 'mongst the gorgeous columns loom.
First came those Cretan brothers, children dear
Of fair Europa and of mighty Jove:
In judgment robes voluminous and sheer
Which rustle warningly as on they move.
Then Aeacus, the keeper of the gate,
Who with these brothers sits in judgment here;
All three were far above all love or hate,
Or coward weakness or untoward fear.
And ranged about on either hand he sees
Those grim attendants of the court of hell,—
The Harpys and the stern Eumenides,
Whose punishment of crime is fierce and fell.
But still within the centre of them all

Two seats were left for the great king and queen.
And now from far beyond the onyx wall
The royal cortège moved upon the scene.
Elfins and demons their great master's will
In swiftest flight to its fruition bring;
And hooded ghosts and imps whose duty still
Is doing his behests on flitting wing.
And fairest Nymphs, sent by great Jove's decree
As fit attendants on the stolen queen,
But veiled and silent all, as should agree
With that grim court where pleasure hath not been.
Now high upon the dais comes the form
Of Pluto, his dark face serene and grand,
But stern and sad from seeing many a storm
Of pain and agony beneath his hand.

Then, at the last, among these Stygian bowers,
He saw—cursed ever by the memory
Of sunny fields and warbling birds and flowers—
The sombre eyes of rapt Persephone.
That flower-like face, for love's entrancement fit,
Was shadowed by long years of nether gloom;
That perfect mouth and lips as honey sweet,
Were like fair roses reft of their perfume.
And, Oh the pity of it! now he sees
Between her eyes, across her features fair,
Stern lines that surely bode no good to these
Sad spirits waiting for their judgment here.
Soon were they seated and the court began.
Swiftly to each was meted out his fate;
And rapidly those imps and demons ran
Conveying mortals to their last estate.

Now doth his heart stop beating; at the bar,
With pleading eyes, in all her purity,
Emblazoned in his vision like a star,
Stands she whom still he seeks, Eurydice.

No charge was made, her life was without flaw,
Her record blameless, and she only came
Before that bar obeying the strict law
Which deals with good and bad in forms the same.
With kindly eyes the listening judges smiled
And told her she was free to go and come,
While the great queen with gesture sweet and mild,
Bade her among these halls to make her home.
But with entreaty filling every tone
She begged to be returned to Orpheus' side,
There where among the hills he wandered lone,
In his dear presence would she still abide.
But grim and stern each judge's face was seen,
The law's unchanging course must have its way,
Each mortal who upon the earth had been
Must in this land of spirits ever stay.
With piteous eyes, whose voiceless pleading calls
For help in this her dire extremity,
She turns to Orpheus who instant falls
Upon his knees before Persephone.
With some vague memory of days gone by,
She nods a kind permission to him there,
For in his agonized beseeching eye
She reads the presence of some unknown prayer.

Uprising then, he took the silver lyre
And, with a prayer for his great mother's aid,
And inspiration from his heavenly sire,
His fingers o'er the magic strings he laid.
Never before nor since has music's soul
Been poured in such a rhapsody divine.
Such tones among the vaulted arches roll
As with the quivering heartstrings intertwine.
The haunting sweetness of that minor strain,
Filled with divinest heartbreak, echoes still,
Smiting the bosom with a sudden pain
So sharp that e'en the dryest eye must fill.

Then as he sang, within the minds of all
Grew up fair visions of the outer world.
Plainly as if emblazoned on a wall
Full many a scene before them was unfurled.
The sighing of the wind through lofty pines
Along the autumnal barren mountain side,
High terraced hills with purple clustered vines,
O'erlooking valleys deep and rivers wide.
Fantastic billowing of golden grain,
The beauties of a flower-bespangled lea,
The sweet refreshment of a summer rain,
The open glory of a wind-swept sea.
Then from the viewless spaces of the sky
Drifts down a sheer delirium of joy;
'Tis the blithe skylark only could supply
Such ecstasy of happiness without alloy.
Then arching over them come sparkling skies
Where great Diana's lovely face is shown:
About her every shimmering cloudlet flies,
Sitting triumphant on her crystal throne.
Beneath that witching light are dusky groves
Where hidden flowers the charmed sense assail,
And Nymphs and Dryads with their shepherd loves
In blissful murmurs tell the world-old tale.

Now to Poseidon's realm their thoughts are turned,
Where Lycidas, (whose dirge no man may mend,)
Lies deep within the sapphire caves inurned,
While round his bier the loveliest Nymphs attend.
Far o'er the level brine the snow-white sails
Of graceful argosy and pinnace shine;
From sunny climes they come, with wondrous tales
Of joyous life in lands of palm and pine.
Changing again, their docile thoughts are led
To tales of love and sacrifice divine:
Again doth Ariadne spin the thread
That shall her lover's tortuous path define.

Once more they hear Andromeda's low moan,
Too fair a flower for that grim rocky shore,
While flying as on wings of tempest blown,
Comes he who'll be her lover evermore.
Whatever tales of sacrificing love,
Of sweetest constancy, to all most dear,
Of honor set all riches far above,
The old earth offereth, again they hear.
Then followeth his own heart-broken tale
Of love's enchantments, and the ecstasy
Of life in many a smiling Thracian vale
Beneath the steepy slopes of Rhodope.
And of the sudden loss that crushed him down
So low that even the warning hand of Fate
Could not deter from braving Pluto's frown,
Hoping his iron will to mitigate.
Then in the very throes of anguished fear
He stretched out supplicating arms to her
Who sat with eyes inscrutable and drear,
And poured forth his last agonizing prayer.

“Dread goddess of the shadow realm,
Hear my heartbroken cry.
Affliction's waters me o'erwhelm,
Like ship am I without a helm
In seas of misery.

Oh be thou pitiful to me
In midst of my deep woe,
Guide thou my pinnace through the sea,
Preserve me, let my sorrows flee
Before thy gracious bow.

Remember thou on Enna's plain
Thy mother's stricken cry,
Her sudden desolating pain,

Her tears like sad autumnal rain,
Her hopeless agony.

If of thy love for her one trace
Still wrings that bosom fair,
Grant me the blessing of thy grace,
Oh turn not from me thy sweet face
But hearken to my prayer.

Shield me beneath thy mercy's wing,
Thee, goddess, I implore,
Such songs my soaring heart shall sing
That still thy boundless praise shall ring
Till time itself is o'er."

He ceased, and as a broken lily stands
Drooping within the sunlight clear and pale,
So he stood waiting, while those wizard hands
Were powerless as the new-fledged nightingale.

But on the dais where the judges drear
Sat erst in solemn pomp and majesty,
Was heard the sound of stifled sobs, the tear
Now visited those eyes of destiny.
The cruel Harpys and Eumenides,
Who still unmoved the keenest anguish see,
Now joined with streaming eyes in piteous pleas
That all the poet's prayer should granted be.
The mortal sages earthly grief had known,
And so wept openly, nor thought it shame,
While on great Pluto's cheek the tears ran down
More searing in their course than livid flame.
That queenly head is bended low at last,
Encircled by the fair embowèd arm,
While choking sobs that follow thick and fast
Attest how deep and fierce is sorrow's storm.

When the first tempest of their grief was spent
All turned with pleading looks to Pluto there,
Who with still swimming eyes his vision bent
On that fair head low lying in despair.
'Neath the compulsion of his wistful gaze
She raised her face one moment in her pain,
When lo, a miracle! to his amaze
He saw the face that on bright Enna's plain
Had swept his heart away. All trace of years
Within his saddened land was washed away
By sweet compassion's touch. Besprent with tears,
She seemed a rose gemmed with morn's dewy spray.
To the unspoken question in his eye
A fleeting smile made answer sure and sweet.
Then thus to him, with look serene and high,
Who stood before the mighty judgment seat.
"Fair son of the great Muse, I bid thee go:
And the reward of thy true heart shall be,
And of the music thou hast brought below,
The maiden of thy choice, Eurydice.
I tell thee thou mayst lead the maiden home,
But as an evidence of faith in me,
See that thou look not back, whatever come,
Else must she dwell here to eternity."

Down to the red core of his surging heart
That Thracian poet-lover trembled then
With joy so keen that his glad eyelids smart
With tears of thankfulness, and hope again
Sprang vibrant in his suffocating breast.
Among the gloomy splendors of those realms
Forebodings dire his courage had depressed
Until this sudden bliss him nigh o'erwhelms.
Now from the dais comes a misty form,
Deep cowed and silent, who with gesture brief
Points to the sombre entrance through which swarm

The hosts of spirits in their hopeless grief.
Uplifting then his glad triumphant face,
The poet cast one final look around
On glories marvelous within that place
Where he, and he alone, had mercy found.

Forth from the presence of the court austere
He passed, while footfalls light as thistledown
Made sweetest music to his listening ear,
In softest cadence following his own.
Dire were the torments that he underwent
Obeying Pluto's last commandment stern.
Ever his gaze upon the ground he bent
Lest that his hungry eyes to her should turn.
So on they fared with minds and hearts elate,
Past poppied Lethe, through the vale where dwell
The vicious brood of Sin, past that dread gate,
Down through the meadows of the asphodel.
Now doth the Stygian torrent stop their way,
But by decree of Pluto, the divine,
Old Charon ferries them without delay
To the drear plain where restless souls repine.
Then o'er the plain and through the portal dim
Where sleeping Cerberus ne'er openeth eye;
And into that dark corridor and grim
Where dwell those imps of aptest mimicry.
Now, in the latest stages of his way,
With hope and joy the poet's heart beats high.
Soon needs no longer Pluto's hest obey,
For in another hour they're 'neath the sky.
Then in the accents of that honied voice
There shrilled a loud exceeding bitter cry
For instant help. Those vicious imps rejoice
To see that Orpheus turns back suddenly.
Alas! the wretched poet only sees
Eurydice swept wailing from his view.
Cold terror doth his very bosom freeze,

And while he lives his weakness doth he rue.
Then as the giant pine on Ida's slopes
Amid the blinding crash of bolt from heaven
Reels to its fall, so mid his shattered hopes
Falls Orpheus, by stroke of fortune riven.

As o'er his whirling brain oblivion crept,
And active thought and consciousness expire,
His straying nerveless fingers overswept
The face of his forgotten silver lyre.
The tortured writhing of the golden strings
Sobbed out a cry of agonized despair
Such as a desolating sorrow brings
When hope is crushed by long unanswered prayer.

Now breaks that loving heart. Oh nevermore
Shall joy or gladness visit that sad breast.
Never those lips shall smile, but still implore
Sweet Death to give his wearied spirit rest.

PART II

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

Fair Thrace, thou cradle of the youth of song,
Where every Nymph and Dryad sweetly sings,
Roaming thy sunny fields and vales along
While to their joyous strains the hillside rings:
Where every Satyr pipes on tuneful reed,
And nightingales pour out their melting notes,
Deep down within thy shadiest covert hid,
Whence to the ear their liquid warbling floats:
Yet hast thou other scenes more bleak and drear,
Where Haemos rears his rocky crest on high,
While low-hung clouds droop threatening and near,
And Strymon's torrents hurtle racing by.
Here, these unfriendly hills and peaks among,
Lived for a time he whom we all adore,
His lyre attuned alone to sorrow's song
Till death's release on fatal Hebrus' shore.
Each gentle dweller of the field and wood,
Each rushing Faun, and Satyr overbold,
Each dripping Naiad and all spirits good
The pitful sad story oft have told.

Muse of the pure and tender lyric song,
Look down upon thy humble servant here,
Thou spirit beautiful and sweet and strong,
Oh, listen to my calling, come thou near

And touch my pen with thine own finger white,
And breathe into my soul thy sacred breath,
So shalt thou help in fitting strain to write
The story of his suffering and death.

After his wild despair at Hades' gate,
When Orpheus fell stricken by the blow
Dealt to his shattered hopes by hand of Fate,
Oblivion long enfolded him from woe.
The desolated cry of golden strings
Struck without knowledge or a sane desire,
Swept backward through the realm, borne on the
wings

Of the sweet spirit of that living lyre.
Through farthest Hades, even to the ear
Of fair Persephone still bowed in grief
Awakened by those strains so sweet and clear,
Came the sad cry of sorrow past relief.
And with the cry arose a woeful sight,
For pale Eurydice swept fluttering
Down to her feet in broken wavering flight
Like butterfly on bruised and crumpled wing.
Stirred to compassion by the bitter cries,
She bade a dusky spirit at her side
Fly thither where the poet stricken lies,
And bear him, all unconscious, o'er the wide
Vast stretches of the sea and hill and plain
That lay between him and the shady groves
Of far off Thrace, and place him once again
Among the smiling meadows that he loves.

And now the poet from the drowsy swoon
Slowly awakens, but he knows not where.
To his dimmed ears there comes the buzzing tune
Of busy bees among the blossoms fair.
And as he lieth peaceful, odors rare
Enchant him with the summer's golden breath,

Till slowly memory returns to tear
His bosom yet anew with grief like death.

His roving eye in deep amazement sees
The well remembered sylvan scenes of yore,
Whose flowers and rivulets and waving trees
Shall give him joy or pleasure nevermore.
Then pierced by anguish straight doth he upstart,
And grasping firm the sweet enchanted lyre,
Onward he wanders, death within his heart,
Quenched now forever his celestial fire.

The pitying Nymphs and Naiads come and go
Waiting for those sweet strains he sang of old :
But murmured chords of deep enshrouded woe
Are all that issue from those strings of gold.
The sluggish weeks and months pass slowly by.
Time brings no solace to his riven breast.
Ever the image of Eurydice
More firmly on his reeling mind's impressed.
Unceasingly he singeth of her loss
While many a lovely maiden, sweet and coy,
Would gladly lift from him his heavy cross
And lead him back to love's delight and joy.
His mournful thoughts are bent on her alone
Who languishes in Hades dark and drear,
Far, far removed from warming ray of sun,
Or song of birds or waters running clear.
Enwrapt in this fond dream he sees pass by
All other maidens as dim shadows there,
Nothing is real but Eurydice,
Still to his eyes his living lady fair.

Foredoomed to death, he wanders from the plain
And seeks the rocky cliffs of Haemos high :
There amid clouds and mists he mourns in vain,
While from afar is heard his eery cry.

Yet higher up the stony mountain side
He climbs, still breathing out the name so dear;
No gentle Nymph doth in these wilds abide,
Only faint Echo wanders sighing here.
Roaming at will, he finds a little grot.
Here doth he slowly fade day after day.
Feeble the hands and weak that long have taught
The strings among Pierian songs to stray.
Those shapely limbs whose slender pliant grace
Has carried him afar, too far in sooth,
That radiant form, that clear and buoyant face,
Are ravaged now by gnawing frailty's tooth.
And veiled sorrow on her ebon plume
Forever floats above his drooping head,
So that he walks in shadow, whether gloom
Or shine be o'er the rugged hillside spread.

Seeing strange visions now, he wanders far.
Ever his fancy one fair face deludes,
Leading him onward like a guiding star
To the deep vales where the dusk silence broods.
And as he goes, he deems that all around
He's scattering his songs so wild and free.
Alas! the strings give but a murmurous sound,
Like the deep droning of the laden bee.

So wandering fitful through the rocky pass,
He hies him on to rushing Hebrus' shore,
Seeking that happiness which he, alas,
Shall find among the sons of men no more.
Till, straying aimless through a leafy glade,
He sees the silver gleam of women's breasts
And snowy sides, the dazzling picture made
More dark the background upon which it rests.
With thought confused in his dim wildered brain,
He sees the sheen of that dear golden hair,

And crying out his joy full loud and plain,
He rushes in among those Maenads fair.

But hate and fierce resentment in them burn
'Gainst one who dared to view their secret rites:
Forthwith upon that wasted form they turn
Whose eager searching eye their wrath invites.
Then this wild rout, among the sweet green leaves,
Crazed by some maddened Bacchanalian whim,
Strike the foul blow that all the world bereaves,
And fragile limb is rent from fragile limb.
Now in the wanton rage that license breeds,
His head and lyre adown the stream are sent:
While they, forgetting straight their ghastly deeds,
Again throughout the forest singing went.

Up from the mangled body rose the sprite,
Exultant, throbbing in its ecstasy,
And swifter than the starry meteor's flight,
Swept down at last to join Eurydice.

A gentle spirit of the mazy wood
Had viewed the scene with horror-stricken eyes,
And from the ghastly copse, bestrewn with blood,
She seeks the mount where springs Pierian rise.
Swept into action by the heartless tale,
The sacred Nine, on glorious wings outspread,
Down to the gloomy forest quickly sail
Where that sweet shuddering spirit them hath led.
Midst flowing tears, with tender loving care,
The sacred limbs are gathered from the earth,
And to Olympus the loved form they bear,
Where all divine and splendid things have birth,

Where beechen shadows waver to and fro,
Where plaining nightingales' mellifluous breath
Makes sweet his sepulchre, they laid him low,
The gold and vermeil tinted flowers beneath.

But when Apollo heard the tale of woe,
Sitting triumphant in his fiery car,
Seizing his fell, unerring, golden bow,
In wrath he dropped adown the ether far.
Full soon that cruel band of Maenads bold
Had reached the limit of their earthly quest,
And lay disheveled on the soft brown mould,
Each with Apollo's arrow through her breast.

For many a rood around the fatal spot
No gentle Nymph nor tree-born Dryad dwells.
Each Naiad hath forsook her pebbly grot.
Unheeded now the crystal fountain wells.
Those fountains soon are choked with leaves and
mould,
And give no moisture to the thirsting roots:
The grass is dead, the earth, now dry and cold,
No longer nourishes the tender shoots.
Each drooping leaf has bowed its faded head,
Enmeshed by spider and the blasting worm;
The trees at last have all their greenery shed
And naked bow before the ruthless storm.
And over this drear spot no bird beats wing,
But looking down from his aerial path,
In widest circle far aside doth swing,
Seeking some grove not cursed by Phoebus' wrath.
For many ages they who passed might view
This desert strange with foliage sere and brown—
A fitting monument for that mad crew
Who dimmed the lustre of fair music's crown.

Now doth the Muse with light compelling touch
Lead where the Hebrus rushes dark and drear
Twixt sombre banks, while winter's frosty clutch
Is felt within her waters chill and clear.

Far, far, adown her restless currents ride

That sacred head and lyre of living gold.
And lo! in order due, along each side,
A bright procession, lovely to behold.
Fair Nymphs and Naiads and Okeanids,
And Nereids from the sapphire caves below,
And Tritons whom divine Poseidon bids
Guard them wherever waters rest or flow;
And dolphins on their undulating path,
And hippocamps with blood red nostrils wide,
And mane outstreaming on the gentle breath
Of sparkling breezes flying o'er the tide.

And so throughout the land, down to the shore
Where spreads the isle-bespangled sea Aegean,
Whence great Poseidon ruleth evermore
The dwellers in his watery empyrean.
Liparian Aeolus imprisoned all
The winds that scourge the ever-changing sea,
And flowered Zephyrus to him doth call
And bids him waft those relics tenderly
Down to the Lesbian shore, whose golden sands,
Shall give that tortured visage peace and rest;
Sheltered from every act of cruel hands,
No more by cheating fate to be distressed.
So on they move through pathless waters wide,
Safeguarded from the briny monster's maw;
Before them and behind the Tritons glide
And force obedience to Poseidon's law.
The ruffling wavelets in their rise and fall
Give to the lyre a gentle swaying motion,
Whereat there rises a sweet murmurous call,
Soothing more dreamfully than Morphean potion.

The watery cavalcade sails swiftly on,
Wafted along by Zephyr's fragrant breath,
Till, slowly sinking, the bright summer sun
Incarnadines the daylight's coming death.

Now Leto comes, and with her shadowy hand
Spreads her dusk veil the earth and ocean o'er.
Still through the darkness doth the mournful band
Press onward to the wooded Lesbian shore.
Before the noon of night fair Dian's orb
Swings quickly o'er the far horizon's rim,
Wherefrom those gracious sea-born Nymphs absorb
Comfort as down its silver path they swim.
And when Aurora's dewy lips had kissed
From off the earth and from the ocean blue
The trailing darkness and low-hanging mist,
Behold, fair Lesbos framed within their view.

The mighty motion of the morning swell
Wafted the lyre full gently to the height
Of a low rocky islet: pearly shell
And coral pink, and shining seaweed bright
Were all its resting place. And here it lay
Forsaken, on that lonely island wild,
Until the coming of a later day
When it should shine in glory undefiled.

The tearful Nymphs at last have reached the end
Of this, their pious quest, and from the seas
With slow and mournful steps their way they wend,
Amid their many-voicèd harmonies.
The weeping Nereids dig with rosy shells
A grave upon the peaceful Lesbian strand,
And where the hallowed mound the surface swells,
They lay dark cypress boughs with snowy hand.
There in an ilex grove that sacred head
Lies buried by the ever-sounding sea:
Where rhythmic surges round its lowly bed
Beat out their thunderous diapason free.
About the grave beneath the sheltering trees
Immortal amaranths and lilies grow.
The song of birds and drowsy hum of bees

Still linger near his face who loved them so.
And there, among the groves, the nightingale
Laments in saddest notes of sorrowing:
And sweeter song, so says the ancient tale,
Shall never bird to listening mortal sing.

When mighty Jove the tale of sorrow heard
Of this sad life by Fate's decree crushed down,
To deep compassion was his bosom stirred,
Upon his brow a grave and thoughtful frown.
Then swiftly that enchanted lyre he grasped
And set it high within the northern skies.
There, to the universal bosom clasped,
It joins creation's spherul harmonies.
And from the sapphire deeps its golden glow
Burns downward through earth's dim and misty
 veil

To our adoring eyes upraised below,
In witness of the truth of all this tale.

Divinest bard, on earth there singeth still
The spirit of the music thou hast given.
Thy strains the hearts of erring mortals fill
With purest happiness this side of heaven.
Through all of thy great suffering and pain,
Out of the scourgings of adversity,
Sore punished, thou hast yet this final gain,
Thy name stands ever for sweet Constancy.

AVE DIANA

Fair goddess of our hearts and of the night,
Shedding afar thy silver glory pure,
Bathing the heavens in effulgence bright,
Who else could so attract us and allure?
Within the radiance of thy crystal beam,
Where all of witchery and charm abide,
Our spirits drift as on a summer stream
Twixt flowery banks down to the ocean wide.
And out across the silvery ocean vast
We float, unmindful of the flight of time,
Lulled by soft lapping waves, until at last
They bring us to a strange and wondrous clime
Where all is clear and pure and radiant
As are thy beams, thou lovely goddess dear,
Where poesy and music ever haunt
The flowery meads and waters running clear.
Here in this happy land no sadness dwells,
Nothing is known of sorrow, naught of fear,
No vain regret the tortured bosom swells,
And suffering has never entered here.
Throughout the land are fountains sweet and clear,
Deep shaded dells with thickest verdure clad,
While ever and anon the sportive deer
Betrays his presence by his antics glad.
Along the pleasant sylvan paths there lie
Fair gardens blossoming in the delight
Of sun and dew, until the charmed eye
Is weary with excess of colors bright.
And further on the hills begin to rise,
Covered with forests to the summit steep.
Here lurk the Dryads, who with curious eyes
Peep at us as we pass through shadows deep.

So pressing on into the ancient wood,
We come at last into an open glade

Nestled among the mountains which have stood
Guarding this woodland vale since time was made.
Across the level sweeps of cooling lawn
Flowers run riot, and the pebbly rills
Murmur their sweetest music, which has gone
Into our hearts, and every longing stills.
Midmost within this happy vale serene,
Surrounded by lithe vines and thorn trees bare,
Which intertwining, form a living screen,
Rises a bower more than earthly fair.
And round about the lovely bower, a band
Of maiden Nymphs, each one of beauty rare,
Sing and make merry, dancing hand in hand,
Their joyous music filling all the air.

Oh, now indeed, we know where thou hast led
Our feet, fair goddess of the silver face!
These be thy Nymphs before whom Actaeon fled,
Thy comrades in the pleasures of the chase.
Here ever faithful watch and ward they keep,
Forever closing in their magic ring
Round thy Endymion in his deathless sleep;
And, watching ever, clear and sweet they sing.

O goddess of the chase,
Give us thy presence fair,
Oh teach us yet to trace
The wild beast to his lair.

Ever thy silver bow
Hath been our strong ally.
Forsake us then not thou.
Still for thy help we cry.

Here in this peaceful vale
Thy watch and ward we keep
Over thy lover pale,
Deep in his dreamful sleep.

Lead us, O queen of night,
Rushing across the plain,
To follow in wild flight
Thy crescent once again.

Only to hear thy bow
Twang as we heard of old,
Thy voice so sweet and low
Giving its orders bold.

Only to hear thy horn
Waking the echoes far—

At this is heard a note with liquid roll
So sweet and yearning that it penetrates
Down to the shivering caverns of the soul,
Whence echoing, at once it recreates
And brings to life all those desires intense
Which from of old have held us in their grasp,
And throbs and thrills and aches through every
sense,
Holding our spirits in its tender clasp;
Sobbing and wailing in its wistful sweetness
Until our very heartstrings give a cry,
Strained past endurance in their incompleteness,
Not yet attuned to heaven's harmony.

And now athwart the blue empyrean,
Gliding as straight as light, swift as a dove,
Cometh a vision which may ne'er again
Be seen by any eyes save those above.
For radiant in celestial glory,
Behold, fair Dian, than a fawn more fleet,
Not chaste and cold as in the olden story,
But blushing rosy red, divinely sweet.
For she has come, smit by the pain divine,
To seek her lover, young Endymion,

And pour along his veins such fiery wine
Would wake to life a block of wood or stone.

But ere she entereth into her bliss
Each Nymph with gracious kindness she would
 greet,
Approaching first now that one and now this,
Blessing the herbage with her tender feet.
At last into the inmost bower she's gone,
Which straightway glows with roselight pale and
 clear,
All sleep has from those heavy eyelids flown,
Enraptured he beholds his goddess near.
And now come gently murmured words of love,
Tender complainings such as lovers use,
Heart pressed to heart in wildest, throbbings move,
While lips from nectar'd lips sip sweetest dew.

Too soon, alas! the wingèd hours have flown
And Cynthia must back into the sky.
Else would all Nature cry and make great moan
Could she not see her goddess clear and high.
For dearer to the night that face so pure
Than to parched crops the gently falling rain,
So must the loving goddess now immure
The hapless youth within his dreams again.
This done, out of that blissful vale she swept,
Which straightway gloomed, losing her presence
 bright.

And we who far and far have overstepped
The bounds of earthly life, led by the light
Of sweetest Dian, never shall believe
Those tales that call her the pale chilly moon.
Such words can never more our minds deceive,
For we have seen her with Endymion.

TO A RED SUNSET

O great Apollo, what beauties follow
Thy roseate car at dawn!
But better than those are the gold and rose
Thou bringest when day is gone.
When the stars peep out and complete thy rout
As thou sinkest in the west,
And thy streamers red, flung far overhead,
Herald thy coming rest.

To mortal vision the gates Elysian
Seem opened for a time,
And from the towers and airy bowers
Familiar in legend and rhyme,
There comes a blessing beyond all guessing
To those of us who know
That our mortal eyes see the smile that flies
From the gods to earth below.

Still the splendor falls on the eye and enthralls
Our hearts with the vision bright;
The glowing hues interweave and suffuse
The heavens with golden light,
Till all must adore, and the sun-god implore
That in some future clime
Our spirits may float to that region remote,
And bathe in that flood sublime.

Now the afterglow and the shadows show
That the god of day has fled.
The colors fade into many a shade
Of purple, saffron and red,
While the clouds so gay become cold and gray
As the twilight waxes old,
And the fires so bright burn dim in our sight,
And turn to ashes cold.

In the near-by trees, with never a breeze,
There comes a rustling deep,
'Tis the birds o'erhead in their airy bed
Settling themselves to sleep.
As the daylight dies and the gem-like eyes
Of the twinkling stars appear,
The vision departs and leaves in our hearts
Only a memory dear.

THE SIRENS

Out across the sunny reaches
Of the sparkling sapphire sea,
There, along the golden beaches,
Beautiful entrancingly,

Fairest sea-maidens repeating
Sunshine's glints in lustrous hair,
Stretch out lovely arms entreating
Us to come and join them there.

Then those pleading accents tremble
Into harmony divine;
Sweeter voice may ne'er dissemble
Love that ever doth repine.

Still those notes from sweet lips falling
Promise happiness to be,
Calling, calling, ever calling
To those isles amid the sea.

WHEN BACCHUS CAME

The world was new and all the gods
Were mad with youth and love,
And Titans trembled at the nods
Of heaven-defying Jove.
Then were the halcyon days of old
Of which the ancient poets told.

Then Dryads swarmed in every grove.
Then every crystal pool,
Whose whispering reeds and rushes wove
A bower fresh and cool,
Showed far beneath its mirrored face
Some shimmering Naiad's dwelling place.

In meads where nodding flowers move,
The murmurous bees intone
The drowsy litany of love,
More dulcet than their own
Most fragrant treasure, when it swells
The waxen semiluculent cells.

The flowering almond's avalanche
Of blossoms pink and white
Sends many a downward curving branch
O'er hidden bowers bright,
Wherefrom, with innate coquetry,
Blithe Nymphs set fluttering glances free.

And round about, the jocund sound
Of piping and of song
Comes from each velvet-swarded mound
Where Nymphs and Satyrs throng.
While twining arms and twinkling feet,
And willowy forms make grace complete.

Far in a vale, where tumbled hills
Skirt the Boeotian plain,
The last outlying sentinels
Of great Parnassus' train,
Behold, a vision of delight!
A maid in spring-time jewels dight.

On dewy rose and violet
Lies Semele the fair,
While rosemary and mignonette
Enwreath her wondrous hair.
The first is for remembrance meet,
The second makes remembrance sweet.

In alternating white and red,
Flushing at every sound,
She waits with joy akin to dread,
A queen with blushes crowned.
Well may high Jove enchanted be
Devotion such as hers to see.

But hark, a step! Now fluttering heart
Lie quiet in thy nest,
Else must thy throbbing impulse start
Soft tumult in that breast,
Whose tender billowings would betray
The love that sweeps her soul away.

Nay gentle maid, with downcast eyes
Fixed on the flowery earth,
This is not he whose ardent sighs
Give to thy love new birth.
The languorous air doth not enfold
Thy god-like wooer uncontrolled.

Fair as a dream before her stands
A being all divine,

Whose gracious smiles, like silken bands,
About the heart entwine.
Thus jealous Hera craftily
Approaches youthful Semele

"Bright jewel of the Cadmean race,
Happy art thou above
All others, since thy lissome grace
Hath lured e'en mighty Jove
To seek thy blissful earthly bower:
Although compact of god-like power.

Nay, blush not thus because I know
Thy secret sweet and dear.
With friendship true this heart doth glow.
Disarm thee of thy fear.
Secure and peaceful mayst thou rest:
Thy tale is buried in my breast."

Then with alluring blandishment
And favoring glances kind,
She moved to where in wonderment
The blushing maid reclined,
And sinking to apparent rest,
She drew the maiden to her breast.

And twined the massive coils of hair
About her soothing hand,
And murmured tender words and fair
In accents sweet and bland;
Until the doubting maid, at last,
Her fear to all the winds has cast.

"But know, O Semele", she said,
"The keenest joy of all
As yet hath never visited
Thy heart. May it befall

That soon thy wondering eyes shall see
Thy loved one in his majesty.

Past mortal thought his grandeur shines
O'erpanoplied with cloud,
The lightnings round his arm he twines,
While bursting thunder loud,
Like echoes from vast heavenly drums,
Reverberating downward comes.

Well do I know thy lover bright:
His modesty's a jest
Among the gods. Demand the sight,
He shall deny thy quest.
By subtlety shalt thou attain
To that whereof thy heart were fain.

Ask thou thy boon: then as he stands
Before thee, let him swear
To grant whate'er thy love demands
Ere thou thy wish declare.
And bid him swear, his faith to fix,
By ebon waters of the Styx.

Now lovely Cadmean, adieu.
Forget not what I've told
For thine own good, in friendship true;
And may thy heart be bold
To seek that which is thine by right,
Thy lover at his glory's height."

Unclasping her enfolding arms,
She leaves the maid at rest,
While new desires and vague alarms
Disturb that peaceful breast.
Then fades adown the flowery vale
Like drifting wreath of vapor frail.

Upon her couch where roses glow
And daffodillies fine
Invert their cups, with overflow
Of all their dewy wine,
The pensive maiden musing lies,
With brooding, thought-o'ershadowed eyes.

Far in the upper realms of light
A piercing scream is heard:
In palpitating, headlong flight
Descends Jove's royal bird.
Full well the blithesome maiden knew
This herald from her lover true.

With pinions set, he sails adown
The trackless paths of air,
And at her feet is gently thrown
A token sweet and fair,
The flower that first saw light of day
Where dying Hyacinthus lay.

Then with a cry of hoarse disdain
For all save power and might,
Tremendous throbbing wings again
Bear him from mortal sight.
More fierce a messenger may ne'er
The tender thought of lover bear.

Full oft she's seen that cruel face
With golden eyes of doom,
Those talons from whose fell embrace
No living thing may come.
Yet howsoever oft he's sent,
Chill fear is with her raptures blent.

Now stooping where the flower lies,
Within the blissful nest

Of her soft bosom's fall and rise
 She cradles it to rest;
 And with its balmy breath inspires
 Renewal of her love-lit fires.

While thus in musings sweet she stood,
 Her eyes with love aflame,
 From out a grove of ilex wood
 Her royal lover came.
 With outstretched arms and flying feet
 He speeds the blushing maid to meet.

The first ecstatic greeting done,
 With beaming eyes she said,
 "My lord of love, I crave a boon,
 Wilt grant it to thy maid?"
 "Tis thine before the thought," said he,
 "What gift shall I not bring to thee?"

"Nay, not so fast, my lover bold,
 Deem of thy maid no ill,
 But first, before my will I've told,
 My longing to fulfil,
 I pray thee swear to grant me this
 By what to thee most sacred is."

Then o'er his smiling face a shade
 Of doubt and anger came:
 As when a cloud o'er sunny glade
 Makes dim the roses' flame;
 But as the sun shines out again,
 His smiles returned and he began.

"By that dread stream of nether hell
 Whose sable waters run
 Past gloomy fields of asphodel
 In twilight shadows dun,

I swear to do thy very will:
Thine utmost longing to fulfil.

Now little disbeliever, art
Thou not content that I
Have done my meek subservient part,
Who else am stern and high,
And yield not lightly to command?
See, here thy servant now I stand."

With eyes whose languorous content
Promise a full reward,
In utter self-abandonment
She flees to him, her lord.
Be sure his eager lips shall meet
Her dewy lips all cool and sweet.

"Fair Semele, now say thy say,
Behold thy servant stands
In burning ardor to obey
His dearest love's commands.
What is it thou wouldst have me bring?
'Tis thine ere swiftest bird might wing

His way across the little space
Between my heart and thine.
What is there of my utmost grace
That should not equal shine
On thee within thy flowery nest,
And me, who am thy lover blest?"

"O lord of love, thy task is light;
Thou needest not to bring
Thy sandaled messenger, whose flight
Outruns the tempest's wing.
As Jove the thunder-bearer, I
Would see thee pass in majesty."

Then for a time amazed he stood,
While in his visage drear
Surprise and consternation showed
Her danger great and near.
Her innocence and ignorance
Have put him in this sudden trance.

“Light of my eyes, thou knowest not
The task thou’st set for me.
Celestial laws bind me about,
In this I am not free.
No living mortal e’er may view
That sight, but bids the world adieu.

But since I’ve sworn that fatal oath
Naught can absolve me now
From strict obedience, how loath
Soe’er to scorch thy brow.
So pray thee grant me heart of grace,
And take some other wish in place.”

“But nay, but nay, my lover high,
So great a god as thou
Must know some secret means whereby
Mayst ward the fatal blow,
And let me see thee stern and grand,
And yet remain within thy land.”

“Rash maid, thou wringst my heart with fear:
Oh change this foolish whim.
I’ll show thee where the elfins leer.
I’ll guide thee through the dim
Vast spaces of the realms below,
Where even celestials may not go.

Within their gloomy caves thou’lt see
The monstrous fiends of hell.

I'll wander hand in hand with thee
Through fields of asphodel.
We'll see the fair, sad queen of pain,
Rapt from the flowers on Enna's plain.

I'll lead thee o'er the ocean's foam,
And through the western seas
Where lies the happy island home
Of the Hesperides.
Within their wondrous gardens grew
The golden apple Eris threw.

Then, winging northward, we shall see
Where wintry whirlwinds blow,
And fill the drear immensity
With drifting worlds of snow;
In lambent flushes o'er the skies
The pulsating aurora flies.

Here broods the everlasting night.
Here Zephyr never brings
His flowery season of delight.
Here never song-bird sings,
But shivering in the frozen air,
In ambush lurks the monstrous bear.

Along the wind-swept icy shore,
Where all things else congeal,
Is heard the far off barking roar
Of walrus and of seal:
While on the deep, leviathan
Heaves his huge bulk through summers wan.

We two will go where Saturn's rings
Whirl round his heart of flame,
And where the blazing comet flings
Through space beyond a name:

And where Polaris swings in air
His playmates of the little Bear.

Where shooting stars like torches glow,
And Dog-star fell doth shine:
Where baleful planets earthward throw
Their influence malign,
And star-dust swarms like fiery bees
Among the maiden Pleiades.

We'll go where fire, erupted, runs
From burning star to star;
Where gyrating and seething suns
Throw molten worlds afar;
Where fierce Arcturus leads the van,
And mocks at slow Aldebaran.

But terror reigns not here alone,
For Lyra's throbbing strong
Gives out a grand sweet undertone
Amid a heaven of song;
And thus shall strike thy ravished ears
The music of the heavenly spheres.

Then plunging through the ocean's swell,
Beneath the solid land,
We'll see the sapphire caves where dwell
The lovely Nereid band,
And dolphins undulating through
The twilight floods of deepest blue.

Though storms above our path may rage,
We'll wander, you and I
Through groves of wondrous foliage
Unwonted to the eye;
While brilliant sea-born creatures swim
Along the fronded vistas dim.

We'll seek the swells where Tritons blow
Their hollow far-heard horns
In gentle cadence, soft and low,
On sunny summer morns;
And see Poseidon sweep along
Behind sea-horses fierce and strong.

Men shall be swept to war for thee.
Shalt hear their stirring cries
In battle both on land and sea;
And deeds of high emprise
Shall make thy fame more fresh and green
Than Helena's, the Argive queen.

Wealth shall be thine beyond desire,
And gems of every hue.
The diamond with its eye of fire
Is thine, and sapphire blue.
Resplendent then thy form shall shine
As Iris with her bow divine.

And when thy days on earth are o'er
Thy gentle sprite I'll bring
To that far happy western shore
Where reigns eternal spring,
And brightest sunshine ever smiles
Above the blest Elysian isles.

And thou shalt ever hold my love,
For thee this bosom glows.
The maid beneath the shield of Jove
Is safe from fortune's blows.
O maiden mine, my heart is sore;
Give me my happiness once more!"

He ceased, and sombre eyes of dread
Plead strongly for recall

Of that rash wish by which the maid
Held him within her thrall.
But yet she deemed that he might still
In harmless wise her wish fulfil.

“And art thou he, my lover fond?
Thou makst a jest of love.
Can there be aught that lies beyond
The power of might Jove?
Shall I, thy handmaid, never see
Thine all-compelling majesty?”

“Though puissant in things that deal
With nature, laws obtain
Which bind the gods in gyves of steel.
We have encountered twain.
An oath sworn by that ebon flood
Must be fulfilled by every god.

Stern Fate another law has made.
That mortal sure must die
Who sees me passing, when arrayed
In thunder's panoply.
By all the love I bear thee now,
Absolve me from that foolish vow.”

But still the words that Hera spoke
Were ringing in her ear:
And still she deemed he would revoke
His stern decision clear
Could she but make him understand
How his resistance only fanned

The flame of her desire to see
That sight, come good or ill;
And spite of her mortality,
To bend him to her will.

So hardens now her heart again,
And makes his dearest pleadings vain.

"Dear lover mine, this breast abounds
In full affection free,
And every heartbeat only sounds
A throbbing call for thee;
But this desire scorns all control,
'Tis longing of my inmost soul."

"Fair maid, thou dost not heed my words.
I tell thee I am bound.
Like keenest double-edged swords
Thine accents pierce and wound
A heart made languorous by love
For thee, whom prayers will never move.

Lo, here I make my last appeal.
Helpless indeed am I.
If in thy bosom thou dost feel
The love thine acts deny,
Yea, by the love thou bearest me,
Oh, set me from this promise free."

But Hera's subtle words had brought
Their deadly mischief now.
With eyes cast down as if in thought,
Serene and placid brow,
"Fair lord, thou knowest my desire,
Its due fulfilment I require."

Then o'er his face displeasure's veil
Came like a funeral pall.
"Thou stubborn maid, will naught avail?
On thee the bolt must fall.
But sad and lone this heart will be,
O foolish, lovely Semele."

With look foreshadowing her doom,
He turns his face away
From that fair wilful maiden whom
The gods perverse still sway.
Then as a meteor in the night
Is quenched, he vanishes from sight.

Alarm hath seized the trembling maid
At his abrupt farewell
Who erst his partings long delayed,
In burning words to tell
How her mere presence filled his soul
With ecstasy beyond control.

Then mindful of his parting words
And ominous despair,
Her fears, like trenchant flaming swords,
Pierce through that bosom fair.
With timid apprehensive eye
She scans the clear translucent sky.

Then casts a timorous look around
Upon the wide expanse,
But naught in that fair scene is found
Her terrors to enhance.
O'er all the smiling grassy vale
Deep peace and quietude prevail.

With mounting courage she returns
Into the flowery maze
Where every flaming blossom burns
Sweet incense in her praise,
And tuneful birds the branches throng
To charm her with their matin song.

Enshrined like pearl in rosy shell,
To tender visions given

Of him to whom her bosom's swell
Brings rapture beyond heaven,
She still believes his ardent fire
Will grant her inmost heart's desire.

Within a near-by grove she sees
A wreath of vapor rise:
It wavers in the gentle breeze
Soft as a maiden's sighs,
As frail and wraith-like doth it seem
As fabric of a fleeting dream.

Again are heard those raucous cries,
And through the crystal heaven
That herald fierce his passage plies,
On stormy pinions driven.
Wild joy within her bosom swells.
Jove's swift arrival he foretells.

Her lover's custom had been such
That on each happy day,
Forerunner of his near approach,
Some token bright and gay
Was dropped before her snowy feet,
Twin lilies meshed in grasses sweet.

But, stooping from the heavens down,
Still nearer and more near,
On that fair head he drops a crown
Of cypress branches drear.
Alarmed, bewildered now, the maid
Sinks to the earth all sore dismayed.

Then as her wandering glances range
From place to place, she sees
A strange and mystifying change
Among the shivering trees.

The tiny wisp of vapor blue
Has spread and shows a darker hue.

With eyes as of a frightened child
She sees it growing still,
And now it turns and writhes, as wild
As thunder-clouds that fill
The wide horizon with the storm
On summer evenings close and warm.

But see! that threatening form dilates.
More broad it seems, and higher.
Its dusky surface scintillates
With tiny sparks of fire;
Like summer marshes seen o' nights
Twinkling with myriad fire-fly lights.

And now there comes a heavy moan
Like thunder's rumbling jar,
And rushing sounds that speak alone
Of tempests heard afar.
Some force resistless writhes and rends
Within that cloud, and death portends.

In terror wild the maiden turns,
But scarce three steps away
When through the ebon cloud there burns
A blue and crackling ray.
Alas, alas, for Semele!
She's seen Jove's awful majesty.

Then with a blinding glare, and wail
Of wind, the tempest leaps
O'er all the place. Across the vale
The swirling blackness sweeps.
And lurid flames in wrath devour
The hapless maiden's secret bower.

Never on any land that lies
Beneath the shining sun,
Or any sea whose waters rise
To greet the alluring moon,
Shall wistful mortal vision see
The martyred maiden, Semele.

* * * * *

Sweet winds came rushing down the vale
And swept the clouds away,
Revealing Jove distraught and pale,
With features drawn and gray;
For Sorrow deep within his heart
Had planted her corroding dart.

With fathomless sad eyes of ruth
For her thus blindly driven
By innocence and wilful youth
Athwart the laws of heaven,
He gazed around as if to find
Some token memory-enshrined.

Upon the blackened fire-scarred ground
A lovely infant shows
His death-still form, which that discrowned
And slaughtered mother's throes
Had left to mighty Jove to prove
How ardent was her tender love.

Then through his heart swept such a pang
As only gods can feel.
Again within his senses rang
Her piteous appeal.
Since then all bards commandeth he
To sing her immortality.

Then swiftly to the infant goes
And breathes celestial breath
Into his lips, and overthrows
The greedy pallid Death.
The infant moves and gasps and smiles,
And soon his father's heart beguiles.

Now Jove calls Hermes to his side,
And bids nor rest nor stay
Till he in Nysa's valleys wide
The smiling child might lay;
And bid the Nymphs and Naiads there
Give him their loving watchful care.

Thus through pale death and terrors grim,
And anguished throes of fear,
The infant came into the dim
Sad world about us here.
The son of Jove, a god was he,
But mortal-framed like Semele.

Of all the names about the earth
By Fame's clear trumpet blown,
Of mortal or of heavenly birth,
Is none more widely known,
Even to the farthest western sea,
Than BACCHUS, son of Semele.

REVERY

When earth lies dead beneath the wintry sky,
And sparkling stars gleam icily on high,
And alabaster paths, bediamonded,
Shriek loudly 'neath the passer's hurrying tread,
And restless horses breathe twin jets of steam
That turn to silver in the moon's cold beam,
And frozen stillness, with her pinions furled,
Broods o'er the silent gem-encrusted world,
I sit within the glowing ingle nook
With pipe and some beloved poet's book:
And as the gray wood blossoms into flame,
My mind turns backward, and old pictures frame
Themselves anew before my dreamy eyes.
Again I see New England hillsides rise.
Before me slopes the lichened granite ledge
With huckleberries all about the edge:
And shyly peering from their leafy screen,
The scarlet globes of shining wintergreen.
Again my eager nostrils can discern
The spicy fragrance of the rare sweet fern.
With quick contraction of the heart I feel
The clasp of tiny fingers, which would steal
Into my own, and sweet adoring eyes
Upraised to mine, with childhood's wisdom wise,
And sunny curls, ah, gentle little maid!
With whom through all my childish hours I played,
The winter's snow and summer's blossoms spread
Their amaranthine white and gold and red
Above thy quiet bosom, buried deep
These many years, in the long dreamless sleep.

Beyond our knowledge is the reason why
This one is spared, while that one's stricken cry
Peals to the shivering stars. The power above
(Whose very name and nature must be love,)

Which moulds our plastic being day by day,
As hand of potter moulds the facile clay,
Like that same potter treats the fragile ware.
This lovely vase, of graceful form and fair,
Is dashed as soon as made. That other one,
(No fairer to our seeing,) has begun
A life of wide-spread usefulness, and high
Sweet service to mankind, but why, oh why?

Far in the shadowy woodlands we explored,
And found the canny squirrel's wintry hoard.
And eagerly we seized the sudden prize
Of nuts, and rushed away with joyful cries.
But suddenly the maiden sees the pain
And sorrow of the squirrel, who in vain
Has labored weary hours 'gainst winter's need.
Then with eyes dropping purest pearls, she'd plead
Against my rougher boyish mood, till I
Felt sorry too, and forthwith back we'd hie,
Retracing all our steps through meadows sweet
With thyme and marjoram about our feet;
And when we reached the winding shady lane,
The squirrel's granary was filled again.

Or else about the old farmhouse we'd play,
And watch the tall and slender well-sweep sway
In summer winds, and rattle in the gale.
And when some elder came with empty pail,
'Twould make a stately bow, precise and prim,
Down even to the well-curb's echoing brim.
Never were we too busy at our play
To take refreshment from the bucket gray.
Ah, well I mind the long delicious sips
Of sparkling water from its velvet lips.

Anon we'd seek the ancient cider mill,
Where in its darkling shadows lingered still

Grim dragons, high above or underneath,
So that we crept about with bated breath.
But when the autumn came, in his slow round
The patient horse the odorous apples ground.
Then she and I with tiny cup in hand
Sought out the wooden spout whence flowed the
 bland

Sweet life-blood of the fruit. With vessels filled,
We'd creep to where, with cautious fingers skilled,
We found sweet home-made cakes of rapturous
 smell,

In the deep earthen jar we knew so well.
Then underneath the ever-whispering trees,
Surrounded by the golden-banded bees,
What wild and joyous banqueting was ours
Among the shade and sunshine and the flowers!

Now to the child-alluring pond we've flown,
Where all the marshy borders are bestrewn
With velvet cat-tails, and the iris blue
In fascinating clumps of color grew.
Here sweet winds waft our laden ships to sea,
Seeking great store of gold and ivory
In far, dim-visioned, glorious foreign lands,
And isles of spice begirt with coral strands:
Till from the grasp of Fancy's visions deep,
We're startled by the frog's portentous leap.

Far down the sunny field, along the wall
Where whistling thrush and strident cat-bird call,
We watch with curious eyes the antics queer
Of a small family of woodchucks near:
Till some quick motion frights them to their lair,
When presto! all we see is empty air.

Alas! like marmots in their vanishing,
My childhood's dreams unto themselves take wing.
For now the fire is burning low at last,

And all my memories of the golden past,
Fade with the fading flames, and die away
Along with them into cold ashes gray.

Sweet, tiny maiden, in thy narrow bed
Beneath the beechen boughs, and garlanded
With trailing vines, and flowers of every hue,
Kept bright and fresh by heaven's impearling dew,
I know not if that power which rules us all
Were not more kind to thee. The stony wall
Of custom hems us in on every side;
Surrounded, we, by lying pompous pride,
And grief and sorrow and temptation sore,
And sin and pain and death forevermore.
Whether this life or thine own peaceful rest,
I know not, oh, I know not, which is best.

YELLOWSTONE CANYON

Not in the blue Ionian isles
Nor Arthur's island home,
Nor on that bay where Capri smiles
Beneath Vesuvius' dome,

Doth such a dream of beauty burst
On the astonished eye
As in this wondrous chasm, lost
From paradise on high.

Well may the troubled soul adore
And worship at its shrine,
Where beauty and majestic power
Of grandeur intertwine.

Abysses smitten deep below
Glow with such hues as vie
With Iris' myriad colored bow
Arching across the sky.

Gulf beneath gulf, the golden walls
Yawn pitiless and clear,
Till on the dizzy brain there falls
A solemn awe and fear.

Far down within the lowest deep
A tiny thread of green
Marks where the battling torrents sweep
These glowing walls between.

Yonder across the chasm bright,
A filmy, lacy veil
Drifting in dazzling gleaming white,
Seems swayed by every gale.

And high above, a silver mist

Where glistening droplets shine,
By magic rays of sunlight kissed
To coloring divine.

O fairy fall, behind thy veil
Of silver, there lies furled
A power to make the spirit quail,
Strength to disrupt a world.

Adown thy shelving roof on high
Arrowy currents gleam;
Swift as the meteor through the sky
They seek the rocky brim,

And with a royal plunge they soar
Down to the shuddering deeps
Where blinding chaos evermore
His boisterous revel keeps.

Relentless as the gates of death,
And pitiless as hell,
Woe to the man who feels thy breath
Or rides upon thy swell!

For him this life is but a span
Briefer than beat of wing
With which thy screaming eagles fan
The spray thou dost upfling.

O canyon beautiful, there rests
Within my memory still
The vision of thy sunlit crests,
Thine emerald waters chill.

And over all, the tenderness
Of summer's golden haze,
While every slope the eye doth bless
With color's lovely maze.

Ruby and pearl and amethyst,
And sapphire, and the sheen
Of ruddy gold, no tint is missed
In all the world, I ween.

Never on any sea or shore,
Whatever light may shine,
Or sunlight or when, arching o'er,
The moon and stars combine,

Shall any scene the earth doth hold
Smite so enchantingly
As that when first I saw thy bold
Bewildering harmony.

Softer than glance of maiden's eyes
Thy loveliness doth seem.
Enshrined in memory it lies,
Fair as youth's wistful dream.

INDIAN SUMMER

O'er all the earth a golden mist
By Autumn's hand is hung.
From every tree her lips have kissed
Abroad her banner's flung.

And yonder, in among the gold,
A scarlet flame I see,
Where that young maple doth unfold
His dying heart to me.

Along the forest's edge embanked,
In keenest rivalry,
The sumac's serried hosts are pranked
In gorgeous livery.

And over all the riot bold
Of fitful color's blaze,
The sun, with level rays of gold
Pours amethystine haze.

As the wild swan's lone melody
Floats up when death is nigh,
Nature her color symphony
Unfolds ere summer die.

Like fleeting pleasure's lovely face
Summer must surely be,
Showing her most alluring grace
Just as she turns to flee.

LINES WRITTEN AT INDIAN MOUND PARK

Far in the dim unstoried past,
Of which no legend tells,
These tumuli, with labors vast,
Were reared o'er cryptic cells.

Upon this bold projecting crest,
Where all the breezes fanned
The grasses growing o'er their rest,
Repose that mystic band.

Here the long quiet dreamless sleep,
Whose waking troubles still
The human heart, with questions deep,
Brought balm for every ill.

The old and wise, the young and fair,
Were gathered here at last,
And found relief from earthly care,
In that long distant past.

And who of us shall say tonight
What longings strange and dim,
What wistful yearnings toward the light,
Midst terrors vague and grim,

Led them to this enchanted spot
Where, haply, their sad eyes
Amid the sunset's glories caught
A hint of paradise?

Wide spreading underneath them sweep,
Fair as sweet Fancy's dream,
Forests and vales and valleys, deep
Embowered along the stream—

The mystic stream that takes its rise
Far within northern lands,
And ends where summer never dies,
Along palm-shaded strands.

Sweet be their sleep! Unknown to them
Grim failure's withering blight;
The dull and sordid cares that hem
The spirit's upward flight.

Sweet be their sleep! As wild and free
As soaring skylark's song,
Dismayed their simple souls would be
Among our modern throng.

Sweet be their sleep! 'Neath sun and dew,
In wind and starlight chill,
They dream the long bright summers through
Upon their sacred hill.

YULE-TIDE

The King of Yule he strides abroad
With voice as blithe and gay
As when he ruled the festal board
In bluff King Harry's day.

A hale old soul is our King Yule,
For countless ages he
Has spread his kindly hearty rule
Over all lands that be.

His mighty feasts in days of old
Were shared by mighty men,
But round his board true hearts of gold
Still gather now as then.

What though the days of stricken field
And deeds at arms are gone?
What though with sword and spear and shield
No battle now is won?

Stout hearts must bear the brunt of blows
Keener than sword or spear;
Undaunted souls face sterner foes
Than mail-clad cavalier.

The times are changed, but still the flower
Of knighthood burgeons free,
And he is blessed who has the dower
Of truth and bravery.

So, like our sires of old, may we
With joyous hearts and kind,
Engage in love and amity
Where yule-tide wreaths are twined.

May every soul in Christendom
Be gladdened by the ray
Of Bethlehem's bright star that shone
On Christ his own birth-day.

TO MARGUERITE

(On the occasion of her début)

Oft in the sunset's golden light
My wandering spirit strays
Through smiling gardens' pathways, bright
With all their flowery blaze.

And straying mid the blossomings
With dream-enchanted eyes,
I muse on all heart-easing things
The flowers symbolize.

The rose's fragrant bosom glows
With love's unquenched desire,
While through the lily's veins there flows
A spiritual fire.

To the forget-me-not is given
Remembrance of the past.
The violet's eyes are blue as heaven,
Sweet to the very last.

The hyacinth's the child of woes;
Narcissus is self-love.
The cloying sweets of tuberose
To drowsy languor move.

The orchid is a stately dame
Of arrogance supreme.
The poppy, with her scarlet flame,
Brings many a lovely dream.

Carnation's beauty is complete;
The pansy's thoughtful still.

Who loves not in his heart the sweet,
Downglancing daffodil?

But still I know not what fair flower
Shall typify to me
Bright friendship's fascinating power
Through all the time to be.

In vain I search my garden gay,
When, lo! here at my feet,
Just budding out this very day,
Behold, the "Marguerite"!

ALONGSHORE

Ho for the rough waves dashing!
Ho for my island home,
Where racing breakers threshing,
Leave wakes of beaded foam!

Where in the wild March weather
Spindrift and foam together
Tap at the window pane.
Unheeding rein or tether
These birds of wildest feather
Seek entrance here in vain.

Brightly the high sun shineth
Over a flowing sea.
No mortal e'er divineth
How great its glories be!
Silver and gold and azure
Mixed in no earthly measure
Give hint of mystic treasure
Where Nereids dance in glee.

But when the sun is sunken
Below the watery rim,
And all its light is shrunken
To silver gleamings dim,
Cruel and ruthless is the sea
As veiled destiny.

Now creeping o'er the ocean
In slow unhurried motion,
Comes the mist demon's frown.
With wrack of clouds low-lying,
Wind-twisted vapors flying,
And far-heard sea birds crying,
The lonely night comes down.

Still, though unseen, the surges
Beat at the rock that scourges
And drives them to the main;
While winds wail round the gables
As did, in ancient fables,
Unshriven souls in pain.

But wind and wave and weather
All merge their sounds together
Into a song of rest,
And sleep, the blissful maiden,
Gathers the sorrow-laden
Soul to her quiet breast.

SPRING SONG

My soul is swung
Like sweet bells rung
In mellow limpid peals,
This springtime day
When blithe and gay
The earth in transport reels.

The grasses peep
From slumber deep,
And smile to meet the sun:
The new buds swell
In wood and dell,
And blossoms every one.

The young woods show
A tender glow
Of delicatest green;
While through and through,
On branch and bough
The sunlight pours between.

And from the earth,—
A kindling birth,—
The dainty dwellers spring
Who fill our cup
With pleasure up
In life's new blossoming.

Now over all
The seneschal
Of spring's awakening days,
The gentle rain,
Brings in its train
Sweet Flora's lovely maze,

The harebell blue,
The tender hue
On fern and mandrake set,
Anemone,—
But chiefly thee,
O springtime violet!

From tree to tree
Their ecstasy
The trilling chorus pour,
And swell their throats
With dulcet notes
Of rapture o'er and o'er.

Along the shore
Where evermore
The willows bend and sway,
Each velvet bud
Stirs in the blood
A springtime roundelay.

The shoreward crew
Whose shrill ado
Is heard both near and far,
Redouble all
Their piping call
Beneath the evening star.

And when the gleam
Of Dian's beam
Comes like a spirit's kiss,
My senses reel,
I seem to feel
The Latmian shepherd's bliss.

A POET'S HEART

Within a vale of storied Argolis,
Where lost Mycenae stood
In other age, but now in this
Grown to a tangled wood,
A poet strayed through leafy nave and aisle,
And thought on life's vicissitudes the while.

Over the solemn hush and solitude
The year's fresh-opening hand
Had led the shining multitude
Of flowers, while many a band
Of joyous birds were carolling away
In blithesome jargoning the happy day.

In one fair glade young spring in glee had set
Her daintiest darlings down—
Anenome and violet
And daffodils, to crown
A slope where slender harebells' trembling fears
Made mournful music for the fairies' ears.

Hither the poet came. In his wide eyes
Surprised delight doth shine.
More lovely than his far surmise
Is Flora's secret shrine.
So lies him down among the blossoms gay
To watch the feathered choir make holiday.

The interchanging play of light and shade,
The gently whispering breeze,
The slumbrous, booming anthem, made
By legioned restless bees,
All lured him down the pathway smooth and steep
Into the quiet realms of grateful sleep.

In frolic mood a band of wandering fays,
Chance-led along the dale,
Came gliding down the golden rays
That pierced the leafy veil.
They spied the poet in his grassy nest,
Where tranced he lay, enwrapped in visions blest.

With shrieks of sprightly joy and merriment
Unheard of human ears,
The swarming brood, on mischief bent,
With laughing gibes and jeers,
Invade his person lying hid from view,
And search and probe his being through and
through.

With immaterial fingers swift and bold
They grope within his breast,
And drag to light with glee untold
His bosom's gentle guest,
Filled to the brim with grief for human smart,
That tender, mystic thing, the poet's heart.

Forthwith the boisterous rout by ruddy shame
Were hushed to musings mild,
For hovering round about them came
Full many a lovely child
Of Fancy, from the violated shrine
Thus rudely entered without warning sign.

Dream faces, startled fancies deep,
Their shrinking forms display,
And shy and gentle thoughts that creep
Back from the garish day,
Scared by the hate and scorn to all things shown
That dare to live for beauty's sake alone.

The thirst that drives the poet his life long
To drink at beauty's well;
The ear that hears the spirit song
That never tongue may tell;
The prophet eye, that sees the dawning light
Expunge the errors of the spirit's night.

The spirit pitiful that sees the blind
Mad welter in the gloom,
That cries a warning to mankind,
And shares Cassandra's doom.
Whose eyes compassionate, since time began,
Mourn the sad edict set on mortal man.

The spirit militant, that holds the truth
Dearer than life or love;
Whom neither hate nor serpent-tooth
Of calumny may move;
But steadfast still, whatever fate may send
Unterrified dies fighting to the end.

And many more of gentle words and deeds,
Unnumbered as the sands,
The fays might see, and each one pleads
With mutely folded hands
That they might be restored to that dear breast
Where neither hate nor fear nor scorn infest.

Ashamed, discomfited, the fairy band,
Each seeking to atone
For what his desecrating hand
Had wrought against the lone
And unprotected mortal lying there,
Strove eagerly their mischief to repair.

And one brought heartsease for his spirit's balm,
Another bringeth rue
And poppies red, whose essence calm
Doth peaceful sleep renew.

One doth anoint his head most daintily
With oil distilled from gums of Araby;

Whose virtue was, thereafter he might hear
The swaying bluebell ring;
The plaintive words that through the year
The nightingale doth sing;
And know the meaning deep of every sound
Of bird or beast, above or underground.

Another whispers in his sleeping ears
Old tales from fairy lore,
The hopes and fears, the smiles and tears
Of lovers long of yore:
And bids the poet as he farther strays
To sing these songs of long forgotten days.

When every fairy wight had done his share,
These spirits wild and free,
Impalpable as crystal air,
Fled where no man may see,
And left the poet there—the legend tells—
To be awakened by the floral bells.

AFTER A LATE SNOW STORM

My heart is saddened by the voiceless crying
Where prone along the ground
The stricken forms of early flowers are lying
In icy fetters bound.

O Springtime, else so tender and so loving,
Why should thy changeful breath,
A blight across the vernal landscape moving,
Do these, thy babes, to death?

Demeter, whither were thy footsteps wending?
Heard'st not thy children's cry
When winter's squadrons, in a host unending,
Swept from the northern sky?

Alone and helpless now the flowers are falling,
Smit by the fatal blast;
The spirit of the snow about them her appalling
And chill embrace has cast.

Alas! within the alabaster masses
We see each pallid face.
The while its dying fragrance sweetly passes,
Like prayer for final grace.

The earth, so prodigal, will bring fresh flowers
To ease us of our pain;
In sunny meadows and in lonely bowers
The buds will swell again.

But to our saddened memory is clinging
Thought of those faces wan,
And sore regret our inmost heart is wringing
For bloom untimely gone.

IN THE TRACK OF A FOREST FIRE

Upon the bleak and drifting shore
The low wind-tortured trees,
Mishandled by the storms of yore,
With gnarled and bulbous knees,
Grotesque, fantastic, sprawl along the sand,
(Withered and sere
In the sunlight here,)
Distorted, goblin keepers of a lonely barren strand.

Against a background desolate
The dreary picture lies,
Where sylvan hosts bewail their fate,
Upraising to the skies
Gaunt blackened arms that tell their sudden doom.
(A holocaust
By the demons tossed
To sweep them all together to their crackling fiery
tomb.)

Yet here, among these naked spires,
Where death his wrath doth wield,
Sweet Nature's force that never tires
Has decked the stricken field
With tangled labyrinth of bush and vine,
(Bramble and brier
Those sons of the fire),
With eglantine and maiden hair and brake and
columbine.

The high sun strikes out tender greens
Along a gentle hill
Sloping where purple iris leans
Above a hidden rill
That chuckles ceaselessly as on we pass,
(With joyous note

In its reedy throat),
And laughs in bubbling music as it ripples through
the grass.

Blithe spring has sown both far and wide
Her gems with lavish hand,
Beneath the rustling herbage hide
A shy and fragrant band
Of pink arbutus denizens, replete
(Through all the years
Our dearest dears),
With memories of joys that fled on pinions wild and
fleet.

Yon swelling, golden, mossy knoll
Thick dappled o'er with red
Had been my dearest childish goal
In years that long are dead:
For there the prim and dapper wintergreen,
(Filling the air
With a perfume rare),
Like dainty woodland belle arrayed in scarlet beads
is seen.

And love dwells here. Among the bloom
Where upstart aspens dance,
Gay fawns, with eyes of liquid gloom,
In youthful rapture prance,
While in some shadowy nook the yearning doe,
(O fawns, 'tis well
She's the sentinel!),
Alert and watchful, standing guard, protects from
every foe.

A little soundless fluttering
Within the fallen wood
Reveals the pheasant hovering
Her leaf-brown, fluffy brood.

They peer about, these mites of recent birth,
(But at a sound
Not a chick is found.)
At all the strange unwonted things in this new-
entered earth.

Thus love and life and beauty come
Where desolation grim
Uprears her banner. They who roam
With eyes not blind and dim
By reason of the selfish tears that flow,
(Alas how few
Have the vision true!)
May see the hidden benison behind the clouds of
woe.

MY STAR

The night wind whispers its story,—
My shallop seems to go
In paths of astral glory
Reduplicate below.

The sense of the great world resting
Comes like a slumber-song
To my weary soul, attesting
How sweet is the night and strong.

Sweet to assuage our losses,
Strong to relieve our pain;
Sweet to make light our crosses,
Strong to revive again.

In the shallop idly drifting
Over the dim lake's breast,
My spirit's voice uplifting
Gives a desolate cry for rest.

When, lo! from the stellar spaces
Cometh a star-crowned wraith.
She hovers about me, and places
Her hands on my brow, and saith,

“O mortal compounded of spirit
Imprisoned in vestments of clay,
Remember 'tis thine to inherit
A part of the infinite day.

In the struggle unending that rages
Twixt man and angel in thee,
Forget not the terrible wages
Of weaklings who falter and flee.

Thy spirit thou shalt strengthen
By conquest of sorrow and fear,
As the days of labor lengthen,
And the time of reaping draws near.

And when the final evangel
Shall visit thy mortal frame,
Releasing thy sin-vexed angel,
It shall rise like a living flame,

And soar to the empyrean
A part of the light divine.
Loud, loud shall be then thy paean.
O mortal, what visions are thine!"

Then bending above me lowly,
Sweet as the hope of heaven,
Three kisses pure and holy
Unto my lips were given.

The first hath brought life's sweetness—
It came like a rushing song:
The second in its completeness
Hath heartened and made me strong.

But or ever the tale be given
By my lips of the last of the three,
May my dastard heart be riven
And my soul in jeopardy:

For across the abysmal distance
On some shimmering night afar,
My spirit in wild insistence
Shall pierce to that maiden star.

THE PRIMAL STRAIN

I hold it true that every man
Has deep within that breast of his
A strain that reaches back to Pan,
And stirs at woodland mysteries.

What though the mind be cultured-filled?
The tiny drop of Satyr blood
To riotous unrest is thrilled
At call of that old pagan god.

The chance-heard whistle of the thrush,
Odor of meadows after rain,
Striking the senses mid the rush
And turmoil of the strife for gain,

Will in a pulse-throb sweep away
Stone walls that seem to touch the sky,
And lead us where the breezes play,
And deep alluring shadows lie.

Or where the loud-complaining brook
Tumbles in riot down the glen,
While shelving bank and foamy nook
Conceal the speckled denizen.

As merry April leads along
The bright procession of the hours,
A homesick longing, fierce and strong,
Tugs mightily, with growing powers,

Upon those cords that lead adown
Into the red heart's central core,
And waken primal instincts, sown
Within the bosom long of yore.

Happy is he whose wistful eye
May gaze once more on field and hill,
And all the thousand charms descry
That Nature's tiniest spaces fill.

For him red blood and thews of steel,
And joy of life throughout the year,
Pleasures that they alone can feel
Who live to Nature's bosom near.

For when the final tale is told,
It comes to this—man's strength, at best,
And spirit free and uncontrolled,
Find common source within her breast.

The men of brain, of bone and brawn,
High thinkers they and men of worth,—
The fruitage of the world's new dawn,
Shall suckled be by Mother Earth.

SPRING IDYL

Out in the sweet May morning,
Yvette, the world adorning,
And I, dull duty scorning,
Haste where the red gods call.
'Tis spring, when nothing single
Can be where love-notes mingle
But feels his blood a-tingle,
And finds his heart in thrall.

Beneath the spreading birches
Whereon the linnet perches
And sings a song that searches
And thrills us through and through,
What bliss beyond comparing
When, with a sudden daring,
Spite of the linnet staring,
Each to the other drew.

Our hearts a carol singing,
Love glances flashing, winging,
Aside all caution flinging,
Our lips in kisses met.
Ah, spite of years of sadness
And toil, the piercing gladness,
The ecstasy and madness
That thrilled me, thrills me yet.

Then through enchanted spaces
Where sylph-like floral faces
Smile up in dainty graces,
We wander hand in hand:
Till in the tender gloaming,
Our footsteps earthward roaming,
We come, like ringdoves homing,
Back from love's fairy land.

ABSENCE

I sit where star-crowned Shelley smiles
And rapturous Keats displays
His sweetest, most alluring wiles
Before my listless gaze.

The mighty minds of ages gone,
Each one a flaming light
To lead my spirit up and on,
Unheeded are tonight.

Reproachfully they all look down,
Giants of song and tale,
And watch me sitting here alone,
While Fancy's crew assail.

In order is the household all.
In wonted place each thing,
Yet down the stairway, past the tall
Old clock, a whispering

Like filmy shadow of a sound
Heard by the spirit's ear,
Pervades the air and hovers round
My lonely vigil here.

And footfalls light as fairy feet
Along a rose-leaf way,
When in their flowery revels meet
Those dainty sprites and gay.

And scarce-heard rustlings seem to swing
The stirring drapery,
More faint than whirl of linnet's wing
Among the shrubbery.

A subtle presence through the room,
Less palpable and dense
Than far-blown sweets from unseen bloom,
A sense within the sense,

Brings to my soul a nameless cheer,
Until I seem to see
Her spirit brooding o'er me here
Who holds my heart in fee.

SUNSET LIGHTS

Along the deepening vale of life,
As sunset's shadows longer grow,
Fair memories come tumultuous, rife
With dreams and hopes of long ago.

And through the sombre darkness here
Pierce sunny gleams from days gone by
That lighten all the passage drear
With youthful joys and triumphs high.

And so the downward sloping path
Holds neither fear nor dread for me;
Since life's most fragrant aftermath
Grows sweeter as the seasons flee.

What though the head be bowed and gray,
While winter's cold and summer's heat
Have tamed the active limbs, yet may
The heart to youthful measures beat.

The magic spell of field and wood,
The sunset with its red and gold,
The brooklet with its rushing flood,
May charm as keenly as of old.

And when this throbbing heart forgets
In swifter flight its blood to send
At sight of April's violets,
'Twill be the end, 'twill be the end.

SONNETS

KEATS

More sweet than Hyblan honey is thy song.
Like clean-cut cameos thy pictures stand.
Be sure the Muse with her own plastic hand
Attuned thy lyre, and by her spirit strong
Thine own was led beyond the common throng,
Along Arcadian vales, to that fair land
Where visions dwell, and there at her command
The speech of gods was given to thy tongue.
What Nymphs and Dryads overran thy dream!
What ecstasy of longing hast thou known!
Along what rose-embowered Latmian stream
Were dulcet-bosomed Naiads to thee shown
As, straying 'neath thy Cynthia's witching beam,
She stooped from heaven and took thee for her
 own?

SHELLEY

Thou fiery spirit of the upper air,
Like thine own skylark pulsing loud in song,
Stern fighter for the weak against the strong,
Our earthly praise were least of all thy care.
Intrepid spirit that would keenly dare
On wings of morning soar the worlds among,
With that sidereal host dost thou belong
About Orion and the northern Bear.
Clear beauty and the spirit's life are thine.
Crowned art thou evermore with diadem
Of lambent flame, whose jeweled lightnings shine
Across the years oblivion to condemn.
The whole world in thy music dost entwine,
Each word a song and every song a gem.

MILTON

As some tremendous Himalayan peak
At sunset throws its splendor o'er the world,
Thy lone and austere genius towers impearled
By light of time which gilds the summit bleak.
Our trembling mortal spirits, frail and weak,
Shrink back from pitchy blackness tossed and
swirled

In that vast cauldron down to which were hurled
Archangels bright who dared God's power to seek.
Yet far below thy mighty genius' crest,
Amid the bright beginnings of thy song,
Lie sunny vales where Nymphs and Naiads blest
On twinkling feet dance gaily all day long.
And one loved spot, where Lycid lies at rest,
Is still a shrine to which the poets throng.

R. L. S.

Thou gentle gossip of things divine,
Thou white-souled lover of the sunny world,
Though flayed by weakness, thy brave spirit hurled
Thy soul into life's active battle line.
Unsullied honor and clear manhood shine
From all thy pages, every page impearled
With jewelled thought. Close in our hearts up-
furlled,
Thy memory hath there its perfect shrine.
By what sweet alchemy hast thou so wrought
That each unlovely thing thy presence flees?
What sage or god thy kindly spirit taught
To lead us into those far southern seas
Where thine impressionable soul had caught
The haunting songs of the Hesperides?

LINCOLN

Thou monument of every good that lies
Among the common people of the land,
Secure is thy great fame. Thou still dost stand
Colossal among giants. To our eyes
Thy rugged features, like the bright sunrise,
Are all aglow with light serene and grand
Which has its source in thy true heart's demand
For mercy blent with firmness just and wise.
Nor do the mists of passing decades hide
Thy glory, which yet shineth clear and bright
From chaos of thy times, and doth abide
Like some high mountain hidden from our sight
When near at hand, but towering magnified
By distance to its lonely mystic height.

A SEQUENCE OF FOUR SONNETS

Demeter, great earth-mother, take thou me,
Thy foster child outworn with toil and pain.
Within thy soothing arms the fretful chain
Of custom falls, and leaves my spirit free
To worship and to take its joy in thee,
Far, far removed from life's mad hurricane
And vortex of contention, where in vain
I strive thy faithful servitor to be.
Thus pillowed on thy bosom let me hear
The grasses rustling round me as I lie,
And all the woodland blossoms that uprear
Their dainty heads, and gossip knowingly
Of things too deep for my dull mortal ear,
Of death and life and their dim mystery.

II

Great mother, take me to thine inmost heart.
Teach me the secret language of the flowers,
And what they say throughout the sunny hours.
Tell the sweet means by which thou dost impart
Its odor to the rose, and bid it start
In pulsing new, what time the winter cowers
And flees before the all-compelling powers
Of great Apollo with his golden dart.
Tell me the secret of the violet's blue,
The hawthorn's white, the pink carnation's blush:
How doth the budding foliage renew
Its tender green along the swaying bush?
What signal dost thou give the iris crew
To decorate the shore with verdure lush?

III

O mighty mother, stern and yet so mild,
Show how the sap distils along the trees
Until the smallest twigs of each of these
Are thrilled with spring-time joy and gladness wild,
And, like thy lowliest hidden grassy child,
Put forth brave show of vernal greeneries:
And fluttering their new mantles to the breeze,
Murmur in innocence all undefiled.
What may the purport of their whisperings be?
Do they the mystery of life disclose,
And what comes after death, when suddenly
The vital spark that through our being glows
Expires, and with fast glazing eyes we see
The light that from Elysium overflows?

IV

Alas! the secret still is hidden deep.
In heedless babble talk the nodding leaves:
Yet my soothed spirit now but faintly grieves,
Drawn Letheward by dreamy restful sleep.
The frolic winds along the hillside sweep
And make irate the buzzing honey thieves
Whose gauzy wings, when boisterous Zephyr heaves,
Are all too frail their wonted poise to keep.
My soul is led the slumbrous vales along
By leafy lullabies, and murmurous tune
Of buried runnels, and the cradle-song
Of vagrant bees who hum a sleepy rune.
Demeter, mother, fruitful young and strong,
Thou bringest rest, thy tired children's boon.

PROSERPINE

Six times the moon hath changed, O Proserpine,
Since last thy presence cheered this world of ours.
But with awakened life of leaves and flowers,
And flow of sap along the tree and vine,
Thou comest with thy quickening smile divine,
Abandoning the gloomy Stygian bowers
Where thou must spend the dreary winter hours,
And now thy breath intoxicates like wine!
Thy velvet footfalls fill the earth with bloom:
Joy bringest thou to hearts that need it sore:
Thou banishest the weariness and gloom
That dull gray skies into our spirits bore,
And standest beckoning beyond the tomb,—
The symbol clear of life forevermore.

TO FANNY

Dear gracious lady with the diadem
Of silver tresses round thy queenly head,
Through all the pleasant seasons that have fled
Since to my keeping came the priceless gem
Of thy pure friendship, which doth ever hem
My life with sweet observance, and hath led
To knowledge of thy virtues,—garlanded
Forget-me-nots enshrine both thee and them.
Whatever envious time may bring to me,
Within my heart shall be no trace of fear,
So that thou keep me in thy memory
And thy blithe spirit float forever near;
Even though thine earthly presence may not be
Perceived by these mine eyes that hold thee dear.

TO A CROCUS

Thou pert and daring flower that pushest through
The lingering snow to show thy winsome face,
Thou sweet forerunner of the dainty grace
Of spring, when blossoms full of sun and dew
And perfume come, thy cheerful smiles renew
The summer in my heart, and drive all trace
Of stormy winter back to that dim place
Where half-forgotten memories lie perdu.
The mystic charm that the reviving year
Brings to our hearts, within thy chalice lies.
Thy velvet lips unto the spirit's ear
Whisper of stirring life that soon shall rise
From the new-kindled earth, and lead anear
Long vanished joys to reminiscent eyes.

IN NOVEMBER

O'er all the face of torpid nature lies
An elemental desolation vast,
That speaks of life which from the earth has passed,
And left its dull dead husk to film our eyes.
But hope, to still the spirit's mournful cries,
Bids each his vision on the future cast,
(Beyond the time of wintry storm and blast,)
When life triumphant over death shall rise.
Since thus the fecund womb of mother earth
May keep immortal even grass and flowers,
How must the demons, in discordant mirth,
Mock at our tremblings when death's shadow lowers;
And howl and dance in glee to see the dearth
Of faith and knowledge in these hearts of ours.

UNREST

I know not by what sweetest alchemy
This grizzled, time-worn, weary heart of mine
Beats with a youthful zest and joy divine,
What time the powers of darkness have set free
The goddess of the spring, Persephone.
Her breath, like incense from some hidden shrine
Doth permeate my being, and incline
To dreams of happiness that may not be.
What strange unrest doth agitate my soul
With longings that I do not understand?
Doth my immortal spirit seek control
Of its own destiny, and make demand
For freedom from that sadness, ages old,
Which rings humanity on every hand?





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